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**INTELLECTUALS AND THE STATE:
THE RESILIENCE AND DECLINE
OF NEO-CONFUCIANISM
AS STATE IDEOLOGY
IN JOSEON KOREA**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Korean Studies
2013

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Abstract

Intellectuals and the State:

The Resilience and Decline of Neo-Confucianism as State Ideology in Joseon Korea

This dissertation attempts to reevaluate the role of Neo-Confucianism in the historical development of the Joseon dynasty, in particular in relation to the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. Japanese imperialist historians wanted to justify their colonization by emphasizing the backwardness of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, and Korean nationalist historians wanted to refute Japanese imperialist historiography by finding the seed of modernity in the late Joseon intellectual trends they labelled as Silhak, ‘Practical Learning’, a school of thought they argued developed in opposition to stagnant and conservative Neo-Confucianism. Despite their different agendas both groups based their research on the assumption that what Korea needed at the time was to “modernize.”

Recent research on Joseon intellectual history has attempted to move beyond the teleological question of Korean modernization, but it has largely been limited to late eighteenth century trends and certain schools of thought. This study, however, situates these intellectual developments in the longer term historical development of the dynasty, and by focusing on how Neo-Confucian intellectuals reacted to a series of dynastic challenges and formulated further Neo-Confucian ideology to overcome them. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of both the role played by Neo-Confucianism as state ideology throughout the dynasty and the reasons for why this intellectual discourse lost much of its momentum in the early nineteenth century.

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Stylistic Conventions

For Korean names and terms, I follow the Korean Romanization Rule (Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2000-8) rather than McCune-Reischauer system. Some English users have become used to the McCune-Reischauer, but it is rare to use this in contemporary Korea. However, in some cases, in particular in relation to popular family names such as Gim, Pak and Go, appear as Kim, Park and Ko, according to the McCune-Reischauer system. Kim, Park and Ko were already permanent. However, in the case of Lee and Choi these are transcribed as Yi and Choe since these usages have become popular. The cases of Silla, Goryeo and Joseon are also followed according to the Korean Romanization Rule. The only exceptions to this are books published in English by Korean authors who use variant forms of Romanization. All Chinese personal and place names are rendered using the pinyin system of Romanization without tone marks. Japanese names and terms are rendered in the standard Hepburn system.

With respect to citing specific original sources, I use modern page numbers or internet citations where possible. For the translation of some original sources into English, I follow James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* and Lee Baker et al., *The Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*. In the case of *Joseon Wanjo Sillok* (The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty) I use <http://sillok.history.go.kr/main/main.jsp>. “*Taejo Sillok* 1392. 8. 2. 4” means the year 1392, August, 2nd, and 4th episode, which refers to the lunar calendar.

Introduction

1.

When historians look back on the course of nations' histories and when people seek to make sense of human history, they have often tried to impose structural frameworks to make sense of that experience. One such framework is modernity, the frame – sometimes the sole frame – through which to examine eighteenth and nineteenth century histories. However, a new assertion that modernity is not a historical phenomenon, but merely denotes a method used in the study of history, has been made. Although modernity itself is a controversial concept and difficult to define, Taylor argues that one certainty is that modernity is a notion based on Western historical experience. Therefore, if one wants to apply modernity to non-Western cultures, it would be easy to assume that all non-Western cultures were defective in some way before they met with Western modernity.¹ Scholars have tried to find an explanation as to the absence of a modern impulse, or why a society 'failed' to develop towards modernity.

This dissertation attempts to establish a framework for understanding the development of Neo-Confucian ideology in Joseon Korea unrelated to the question of modernity by examining how Neo-Confucian intellectuals responded (successfully and unsuccessfully) to the issues of their time. It aims to make a contribution to the re-valuation of Neo-Confucianism in the region and to the ongoing discourse on ways to understand historical development that are not based on a European model and notions

¹ Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," 172–174.

of modernity.

2.

Korea in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is an example of a country examined through the framework of modernity that is often classified as a historical failure. In the early twentieth century, imperial historiography, written mostly by Japanese historians but also by a number of Korean historians, assumed that the Joseon dynasty was stagnant before it encountered Western culture. These imperial historians tried to find an explanation as to why Korea 'failed' to develop towards modernity. They provided justification for Japanese control over Korea by depicting Korean history as having demonstrated no capacity for autonomous development or progressive spirit; and the implicit assumption of these scholars is that Korean intellectuals had failed to aid their nation's development. Joseon intellectuals had not provided the ideological underpinning to take the Joseon dynasty forward. The imperial historians' focus on Neo-Confucian thought was considered backward and out-of-date. While Joseon Neo-Confucian literati focused on out-of-date issues such as Sino-centrism, Ritual Learning and harmony by principle (理), the rest of the world was being led by intellectuals who were helping the scientific, political and industrial development of their nations.

Countering imperialist historiography, Korean nationalist scholars argued that contrary to imperialist claims of stagnation, there were seeds of modernity that were internal sources of energy that moved the Joseon dynasty forward. However, the problem with the nationalist counterargument is that it is still trapped within the discourse of modernity. It seems to counter imperialist claims of stagnation with claims that society

was led by some Joseon intellectuals towards modernity, and nationalist historians clearly believe that the Silhak movement was providing modernist seeds. The problem with this attempt to use the theory of modernity to evaluate the late Joseon is that it oversimplifies Neo-Confucianism. Their modernity depends upon a black and white binary logic of tradition/modern, progress/stagnation that reduces the complex dynamic at the centre of a vivid movement and leaves out, or ignores, the significant debates that occurred during this period. Nationalist scholars have depicted Neo-Confucianism as an obstinate mule and blamed it for the stagnation of the Joseon dynasty. What is more, any time rationality and empiricism is discovered, it is usually interpreted as a sign of modernity. This is why nationalist scholars began to emphasize the practicality of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. However, both sides – Japanese imperialist historiography and Korean nationalist historiography – have found it hard to depart from the existing framework of modernity. Consequently, Joseon intellectual trends have been evaluated by this sole criterion. This dissertation sets out to analyze late Joseon Neo-Confucian intellectual trends in the light of the devastating criticism of both Japanese imperialist scholars and Korean nationalist scholars of Neo-Confucianism modernist frameworks. Do these two divergent views of Joseon intellectuals and their impact on the course of Korean history accurately reflect the complexities of Joseon Neo-Confucian thought and its impact upon late Joseon?

3.

Beyond the modernity framework, it is easy to find various and vivid intellectual movements in Joseon, however, this is beyond the scope of a single research. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the development of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, while other

various intellectual trends in Joseon should be put aside for future research projects. There is a more fundamental question regarding why the focus of this dissertation was limited to Joseon Neo-Confucianism. When we talk about the Neo-Confucian transformation of Joseon society, what period – either early or late Joseon – are we discussing? This is a vital question because for many nationalist scholars Joseon Neo-Confucianism reached its peak around the Four-Seven Debate (四端七情論爭) in the early Joseon period. For these nationalist scholars this represented the pinnacle of Neo-Confucianism; Neo-Confucianism had already transformed society. This has been questioned, most notably by Deuchler and Duncan. The former compares Goryeo's lineage, kinship and inheritance with Joseon's, and concluded that Joseon's Neo-Confucian transformation was achieved slowly and across several centuries. It means that the early Joseon was not fully developed enough to be called a Neo-Confucian society.² The sixteenth century Four-Seven Debate was not the peak but one of the starting points of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. In addition, Duncan compares the late Goryeo's elite with early Joseon's counterpart, and underlined that there was no sharp change during the period of the Goryeo and Joseon transition.³ In the end, according to Deuchler and Duncan's research, the early Joseon was not yet a Neo-Confucian society. I adhere to this latter viewpoint, that Neo-Confucianism did not reach its peak in early Joseon and this is the reason the events and incidents I analyze in relation to Neo-Confucian intellectuals occur in late Joseon, which is the focus of my research.

² Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1992).

³ John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Choson Dynasty* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2000).

4.

My thesis traces the birth to the end of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. This is discussed in the following section: the discourse of legitimate heirs and enshrinement as the birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism (chapter 1); the first crisis for Joseon Neo-Confucianism after Neo-Confucian literati took political power (chapter 2); the discourse of Sino-centrism as the first Neo-Confucian solution for their own time (chapter 3); the Ritual Controversy as representative of the prosperity of Joseon Neo-Confucianism (chapter 4); the Horak Controversy as the pinnacle and ending of Joseon Neo-Confucianism (chapter 5); *Silhak* as the fruits of Joseon intellectuals' wandering (chapter 6). I argue that an analysis of these core notions and debates provides a more accurate understanding of the course of late Joseon intellectual history.

To do this, it is important to provide background information about the birth of Neo-Confucianism itself because this illustrates the dynamics behind the development of Neo-Confucian thought. The first chapter examines the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement as a starting point to this study. While the discourse lasted for a hundred years from the early sixteenth century, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati eventually succeeded in concentrating political power in their hands through this discourse.

After Joseon Neo-Confucian literati became the dominant political power, the *Imjin* war (the Japanese invasion in 1592) was the first crisis they faced. The discourse of *Jaejojieun* (再造之恩, the benefit of reconstruction of the dynasty) was developed in the process of the postbellum evaluation of the *Imjin* war. The second chapter examines the discourse of *Jaejojieun* as Joseon's domestic policy and how the Joseon court

intentionally chose the discourse of *Jaejojieun* to deal with domestic postbellum problems and not to repay the debt to Ming on diplomatic grounds. The discourse was not a Neo-Confucian or philosophical solution advocated by a rising power group – that is the Neo-Confucian literati – although it was the principal issue after they achieved dominant political power in the Joseon court. *Jaejojieun* was apparently a political solution by Neo-Confucian courtiers. Their Neo-Confucian discipline was unable to play a significant role. In fact, it did not need to be since the Ming dynasty was the power that was to be repaid.

During the establishment of renewed relations between Ming and Joseon under the *Jaejojieun*, the Jurchen ethnic group began to gain considerable political power in Manchuria. The diplomatic policy toward Qing⁴ became a vital issue in the Joseon court, and Joseon Neo-Confucian courtiers were divided into two sides, pro- and anti-Qing. What was more, Ming's fall gave Neo-Confucian intellectuals the added burden of Joseon as the last Neo-Confucian society in the world. With these important changes, Sino-centrism (中華主意 or 華夷觀) was rediscovered and developed as the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's philosophical response. The third chapter examines the policy of Sino-centrism as the philosophical solution not a political or diplomatic answer for their own time.

Outwardly, the seventeenth century Ritual Controversy (禮訟論爭) seemed very simple and insignificant. However, it had been fiercely disputed among Joseon courtiers, and even Neo-Confucian literati who were out of office participated in the controversy. The

⁴ Jurchen was Manchuria's main ethnic group. They established the Jin dynasty (金, 1115–1234) and, during the Ming dynasty, established Later Jin dynasty (後金) in 1616. And then they changed their name to Qing in 1636. This essay will call them Qing in common. Sometimes Jurchen and Later Jin will be used to point out the time before or after they established a dynasty.

fourth chapter investigates the main arguments and significance of the Ritual Controversy and its relation to discourse of Sino-centrism (chapter 3) and the Horak Controversy (chapter 5) within Joseon intellectual trends. This chapter investigates why seventeenth century Joseon Neo-Confucian literati consistently pursued a more concrete and definite principle and how they, the intellectuals of their own time, attempted to establish a more concrete and definite principle within Neo-Confucianism in order to rebuild Joseon as an ideal Neo-Confucian society.

The Horak Controversy (湖洛論爭) is discussed in the fifth chapter. This chapter mainly focuses on the meanings of the Horak Controversy in relation to Joseon intellectual trends. The various debates within the Horak Controversy are studied taking into account the argument that the late Joseon Neo-Confucian literati hungered for a more concrete basis and tried to locate it within Neo-Confucianism as well as detailing the extremely unpredictable and important results of their attempts to find it. This research is inclined to agree with the assertion that the Horak Controversy is the pinnacle of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. At the same time, however, this research also asks what the fruits of Joseon Neo-Confucianism's zenith were.

After this discussion, this dissertation deals with Silhak (實學, Practical Learning) in the final chapter. Korean nationalist historians' assertion of the existence and proliferation of a Silhak movement clouds all possible views of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. When studying Neo-Confucian intellectual trends with the assumption that the 'conservative' and 'reactionary' Neo-Confucian literati stood in binary opposition to the 'progressive' and 'modernizing' Silhak, it is impossible to gain a meaningful picture of Neo-Confucian intellectuals: they are reduced to a mere

caricature. Silhak will be discussed in the context of Joseon intellectual trends, not as influenced by new elements from Qing (北學) or Western culture (西學). Silhak itself is a controversial issue and needs a wealth of new research. This dissertation dispels the cloud of modernity from the rhetoric that hangs over Silhak and places it in the context of Joseon intellectual trends.

5.

I re-evaluate Joseon Neo-Confucianism and analyze its birth, growth, prospering, pinnacle and decline according to a different framework than that offered by the theory of modernity. The responsibility of intellectuals is to explain, interpret and understand their own times, and they have to provide solutions to these contemporaneous problems. This is the standard by which we need to evaluate intellectuals and their ideology. If we want to understand late-Joseon intellectual movements, this is the standard by which we should evaluate them, not the theory of modernity. The mission of the Neo-Confucian literati was to transform the Joseon dynasty into a Neo-Confucian society. Their mission was to build Joseon as the successor to Chinese civilization. Their mission was not to modernize Joseon in the way that Japanese imperialist or Korean nationalist historians understand. From the outset, Confucianism tried to extend its focus from self-cultivation to governing a state and even the world (修身 齊家 治國 平天下).⁵ We can find a similar process in Joseon Neo-Confucianism, and divide this development into three main stages: 1) Joseon intellectuals learnt their Neo-Confucianism from Ming and they emulated the Ming before the sixteenth century. Their concern was mainly with the self-cultivation stage (修身); 2) In the early sixteenth century Joseon intellectuals using

⁵ Zi, Si, *Great Learning*, Chap. 1.

Neo-Confucian discipline began to administrate Joseon as main courtiers. Neo-Confucianism became the sole method by which to evaluate a society in Joseon. This stage could be the second to govern its own household or state. ‘齊家治國’ or ‘齊’ means ‘govern,’ ‘家’ means ‘house or family,’ ‘治,’ ‘govern,’ ‘國,’ ‘state’; 3) Joseon Neo-Confucian literati began to believe that Joseon was more Neo-Confucianized than the Ming around the late sixteenth century. After the fall of the Ming Joseon intellectuals believed strongly that they were the last Neo-Confucian society in the world and tried to rebuild Joseon as an ideal and exemplary version of this society. This shifting understanding of Ming by Joseon intellectuals developed in the seventeenth century. This period might be the last stage to govern the world ‘平天下.’ ‘平’ means ‘make peace,’ and ‘天下,’ ‘the world.’ It is given this sense of Confucianist historical mission and in the context of shifting East Asian geopolitics that the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati should be evaluated. However, Joseon intellectuals’ thorough but excessive pursuit of the unchangeable truth finally met a sudden end. The process of their search for a more concrete truth produced various unexpected intellectual results. Silhak can be understood as either one of the results of this or as a popular term for this. However, Silhak was not a mere modernist seed or the source of internal energy to modernize Joseon.

As can be seen from the above discussion, this dissertation examines intellectual history by following a succession of major debates, rather than by following prominent figures or schools. However, this does not entail a basic listing of major debates independent of their historical context. The main interest of this thesis is to evaluate these debates within their proper context. The issues of the Neo-Confucian legitimacy (chapter 1), Sino-centrism (chapter 3), the Ritual Learning (chapter 4) and human nature (chapter 5)

are discussed in terms of Neo-Confucian intellectual circles from the outset. There are several reasons for examining the political and international context and Joseon intellectual history.

Many of these apparently out-dated issues were revived in the late Joseon historical context and this is significant. Joseon Neo-Confucian literati, as the intellectuals of their own time, tried to provide a Neo-Confucian solution to their political and international context. Second, intellectuals are understood to have a mission to interpret and explain their own period, and propose an answer from their endeavours. In order to accomplish this mission, they are required to comprehend fully both a practical understanding of their own time and to develop a theoretical approach from their own system of thought. An answer without a sufficient theoretical foundation would be the business of politicians not the business of intellectuals. Conversely, idealistic answers without practical considerations are meaningless. Therefore, if one evaluates the intellectual history of a certain society, one should consider this point of view; whether the intellectuals of their own time offer a proper response based on practical and theoretical foundations, not whether they were pragmatic, conservative, modern, traditional, and so on. Therefore, a major issue of this dissertation is whether the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati as intellectuals of their own time developed practical responses based on theoretical foundations for their society.

The first issue was Neo-Confucian legitimacy. It was not a simple political or military power issue in the Joseon court. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati took political power from the existing meritorious courtiers using a new framework, Neo-Confucian legitimacy. Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's first mission was to highlight Neo-

Confucian values such as Neo-Confucian morality or legitimacy. This discrimination against the meritorious group was their weapon to take political power from the meritorious group (chapter 1). The second mission was to survive the *Imjin* war and govern postbellum Joseon. They used *Jaejojieun* as a propaganda tool to turn people's concern away from domestic issues (including the Joseon court's maladministration) to international issues (Ming's relief force) (chapter 2). The third mission was to explain the peculiar international situation and resolve the resentment felt on being defeated by a barbarian, Qing. Sinocentrism was their answer (chapter 3). Ritual Learning was studied and utilised to rebuild Joseon according to a more concrete standard, *Li* (禮). Joseon Neo-Confucianism enjoyed its heyday during this period. However, their attentions began to wander off the expected paths (chapter 4). They failed to find an answer in the real world and began to change their focus toward more theoretical fields. Yet this also failed (chapter 5). Silhak would become the struggle of stray intellectuals (chapter 6).

6.

This dissertation also avoids a recent scholarly tendency in that some historians have applauded the Joseon Neo-Confucianism of the eighteenth century, evaluating it as the pinnacle of Joseon civilization.⁶ However, this research underlines the sudden ending of Joseon Neo-Confucianism by examining the Horak Controversy. This research calls this phase the "intellectual wandering period." In fact, more research on eighteenth-century Joseon intellectual trends outside of Neo-Confucianism is needed. This included

⁶ Choe, Wansu, "Joseon Wangjoeui Munhwajeoljeonggi, Jingyeongsidae," 13–44.

research on the so-called Silhak, new intellectual trends from Qing and comparative research with Qing, Japan and Joseon in the eighteenth century are required.

This research covers a long time span, from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century, and a large number of prominent figures of Neo-Confucianism. Each chapter reviews the overall state of late Joseon intellectual trends, instead of compiling individual detailed accounts of each figure. One of the main difficulties in studying Joseon intellectual history is the countless and varied sources. Therefore, rather than attempting to unearth unused material from private documents of various figures in the late Joseon, this thesis mainly uses materials which have been previously examined and which require new interpretations. Fortunately, the issues examined in chapters one to four were frequently discussed in the Joseon court, therefore most of the sources were recorded in the *Joseon Wangjo Sillok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty). The main contribution of this dissertation is a new methodology to evaluate the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in terms of the responsibilities of intellectuals of the period, one not indebted to the theory of modernity. In addition, to link this reinterpretation to other Joseon intellectual trends is another contribution of this research.

1. The Birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism:

Discourse of the Legitimate Heirs and Enshrinement

There is no universally accepted date for the birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism (朝鮮性理學), therefore this needs analysis. I look at the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement (文廟從祀論議) which, I argue, is the true birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. I do this by analyzing the final five Joseon Neo-Confucian literati chosen to be enshrined (五賢), Kim Geongpil (金宏弼, 1454-1504), Jeong Yeochoang (鄭汝昌, 1450–1504), Jo Gwangjo (趙光祖, 1482–1519), Yi Eonjeok (李彦迪, 1491–1553) and Yi Hwang (李滉, 1501–1570), to verify when Joseon Neo-Confucianism was ready to become a dominant ideology in the Joseon dynasty. The reason why I chose these five enshrined figures is because the first three literati demonstrated the power shift from the previous political power group, the meritorious courtiers, to the Neo-Confucian literati, and the other two figures produced extremely influential, original, and mature examples of independent Joseon Neo-Confucianism. I investigate the merit awarding system (功臣冊封) in order to compare the older standards of the non Neo-Confucian power group with the new standards of the Neo-Confucian literati to account for the change. In this chapter I also deal with the Four Literati Purge, which shows how the discourse of the heirs of legitimacy and enshrinement assumed a primary status in Joseon academic circles as well as its political field. It is during these days that Joseon Neo-Confucianism finally began.

1. 1. A Confucian Shrine: *Munmyo* (文廟)

A shrine is a holy or sacred place dedicated to a specific god, ancestor, hero or deity and at which location they are worshipped. There are of course various shrines or temples towns and countries; Christian churches, Buddhist monasteries, Islam mosques, Daoist temples, Confucius shrines, temples devoted to local deities as well as altars to war heroes. This section focuses mainly on Confucian shrines.

The largest and oldest Confucian shrine is understandably found in Confucius' (孔子, 552–479 BCE) hometown, present-day Qufu (曲阜) in Shandong Province (山東省) China. It was established in 479 BCE, just after Confucius' death. Duke Ai of the State of Lu (魯哀公, ?–467 BCE) ordered that the Confucian residence should be used to worship and offer sacrifice to Confucius, which is known as Kong Miao (孔廟). The Kong Miao was expanded repeatedly over the last 2400 years and it became a huge Confucian complex.⁷

In addition to Kong Miao in China, Confucian shrines were widely built in Japan, Vietnam, Korea and other Asian countries. The most famous Confucian shrine in Japan is the Yushima Seido (湯島聖堂), built in the seventeenth century during the Edo period (江戸幕府, 1603–1867). It was connected to the private school conducted by the Neo-Confucian scholar, Hayashi Razan (林羅山, 1583–1657). The earliest Confucian shrine in Vietnam was established in Hanoi in the eleventh century, but outside of China the largest number of Confucius shrines is found in Korea. Confucian shrines were first

⁷ Sommer, "Destroying Confucius," 97-100.

built during the Goryeo period (高麗, 918-1392). The oldest shrine in existence was built in 1398, the seventh year of the reign of King Taejo (太祖, 1392-1408), which was called *Munmyo* (文廟). Mun (文) is a combination of King Munseon (文宣王), Confucius' posthumous title, and Myo (廟), a temple.

Munmyo was at the pinnacle of the cult of Confucius but not representative of Joseon religious shrines. There was a kind of hierarchy in Joseon religious services. The *Wongudan* (圓丘壇) was at the peak of the Korean pantheon of gods and spirits to be worshipped. The *Wongudan* had a distinctive feature. Since Heaven received sacrifices at an open square altar, there was no specific building for services. From the Three Kingdom Period (三國時代) onwards Koreans served Heaven at the *Wongudan* but this was stopped by King Sejo (世祖, 1455-1468). According to Neo-Confucianism only the Son of Heaven (天子), the Emperor of China, could serve Heaven. Joseon's king could not directly serve Heaven. However, around the end of his reign the Joseon King Gojong (高宗, 1863–1907) proclaimed himself the Emperor of the Daehan Kingdom (大韓帝國) and revived the Heaven sacrifices (天祭). This means that there was no Heaven sacrifice for most of the Joseon period. At the second stage are the spirits of the dynastic ancestors and the gods of soils and grains. The *Jongmyo* (宗廟) is dedicated to memorial services for the deceased kings and queens of the Joseon dynasty, and the *Sajik* (社稷), the gods of soils and grains. The *Jongmyo* and *Sajik* had their own buildings for services. In times of dynastic crisis, to maintain the tablets of spirit (神主) of the *Jongmyo* and *Sajik* was a priority for Joseon kings. 'For *Jongmyo* and *Sajik*' was said to be the same as proclaiming 'for the Joseon dynasty.' At the third level of this hierarchy was the temple devoted to Confucius, the *Munmyo*.



<Picture 1: *Munmyo*, Sungkyunkwan University, Jongro, Seoul>

The *Munmyo* had enjoyed primary status among hundreds of Confucian shrines in Joseon but the *Munmyo* building itself had experienced a change in fortune. Right after the erection in 1400 it was destroyed by fire and restored in 1407. It was destroyed again during the Japanese invasion (壬辰倭亂, *Imjinwaeran*, 1592-1598). In 1601 it was restored. Ironically, this restoration was completed in 1869. It means that the *Munmyo* was incomplete while the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement was being discussed in the seventeenth century.⁸

There was a characteristic feature in the *Munmyo*. There were twenty-four sages enshrined in *Munmyo* before the Joseon dynasty foundation. Among these twenty-one were Chinese, and only three were Korean. The main place is of course for Confucius.

⁸ Kim, Yongheon, *Joseon Seongrihak*, 298–305.

The second stages are for those Four Sages (四聖), Yanzi (晏子, 521–491 BCE), Zengzi (曾子, 506–436 BCE), Mencius (孟子, 372?–289? BCE) and Zisi (子思, 483?–402? BCE). Next are the Ten Confucius' Followers (十哲) and the Six Song's Sages (六賢) standing in a row behind the Four Sages. After the Six Song's Sages, there were no Confucians from Ming and Qing. It means that Joseon Neo-Confucians believed Joseon had their own Neo-Confucian legitimacy (道通) after the Six Song Sages (Yi, G.: 20). The next places are for Korean: Seolchong (薛聰, 655-?) and Choe Chiwon (崔致遠, 857-?) of the Silla dynasty (新羅, 57 BCE–935 CE) and An Hyang (安珣, 1243–1306) of the Goryeo dynasty (高麗, 918–1392). The enshrinement of the next legitimate heir after An Hyang was, of course, an important issue.

1. 2. Candidates for Legitimate Heirs

In this second section, dealing with the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement in the first century of the Joseon dynasty, I compare this with the later discourse led by the new generation, the Neo-Confucian literati (士林, *Sarim*). These changes of candidates for enshrinement demonstrate the new environment among Joseon academic circles as well as changing political context.

Before turning to this it is necessary to study these groups, namely the Joseon Neo-Confucian founders, the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati. First, Joseon Neo-Confucian founders are sometimes called *Gwanhakpa* (官學派, the School of Administrative Philosophy). However, there was neither a specific school grouped

under the name of *Gwanhakpa* nor a distinct philosophy. In addition, it is difficult to distinguish them from the late Goryeo Neo-Confucian literati or the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati that followed.⁹ Sometimes it is also confused and overlapped with the *Hungupa* (勳舊派, the meritorious courtiers). The Neo-Confucian founders are – like their name suggests – the first generation of the new dynasty, Joseon. Most of them were appointed as *Gaeguk Gongsin* (開國功臣) more than once since they made a significant contribution to the foundation of Joseon. This means that they were also grouped under the label of the meritorious courtiers. As their name suggests, they were also Neo-Confucians and their political philosophy was based on Neo-Confucianism. It means that there was no sharp standard to distinguish the founders of Joseon Neo-Confucianism from the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati. Fortunately, both Joseon Neo-Confucian founders and the meritorious courtiers of the first century of Joseon disappeared naturally or politically during the reign of King Taejong. Therefore, in this thesis Joseon Neo-Confucian founders are understood to be the first generation power group of Joseon.

When this thesis refers to the meritorious courtiers they are understood to constitute the second generation of Joseon. There was no specific political power group around the reign of the fourth King Sejong (世宗, 1418–1450). The reign of King Sejong could be seen as marking a clear division between the first generation power group and the second. The seventh King Sejo (世祖, 1455–1468) and the ninth King Seongjong (成宗, 1470–1494) produced plenty of meritorious courtiers. Some of them were awarded more than three times. They rose as a power group after the mid-fifteenth century. Neo-Confucian literati in this thesis refer to the third generation after King Seongjong.

⁹ Yu, Choha, “Joseon Seongrihak Ironjeok Jeongcho,” 19.

Unfortunately, there is no clear division between the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati. Strictly speaking, they partly overlap. In the case of Kim Anguk (金安國, 1478-1543), he was famous as Kim Geongpil's disciple and Jo Gwangjo's friend. He could be called a member of the Neo-Confucian literati. However, both Kim Anguk's mother's family (外家) and his wife's family (妻家) were meritorious courtiers.¹⁰ This overlap inevitably generated a political power tussle, and the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement was debated over as one of main issues between them.

It was the Neo-Confucian literati who used the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement as a political weapon against the meritorious courtiers. They changed the existing candidates for enshrinement to benefit themselves. Through these changes Neo-Confucian literati created a new political dynamic, which was very favourably inclined towards them. Now it is time to study the first to the final candidates for enshrinement.

Jeong Dojeon (鄭道傳, 1342–1398) and Gwon Geun (權近, 1352–1409) were the first candidates for enshrinement. They have left their intellectual works along with distinct political legacies from the first phase of the Joseon dynasty. Jeong Dojeon was said to be an architect of the Joseon dynasty and was also famous as a court designer of Hanyang, the capital of Joseon. He received the first rank of the first awarding (開國功臣)¹¹ of the Joseon dynasty.¹² Needless to say, Jeong Dojeon was one of the main figures for the foundation of Joseon. The importance of his political works cannot be exaggerated, and Jeong also left behind a remarkable academic achievement as one

¹⁰ Jeong, Daehwan, "Hugisarimpa," 94.

¹¹ The awarding system will be discussed in the next section.

¹² *Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 8. 20. 2.

of Joseon's Neo-Confucian founders. He executed an elaborate and comprehensive theoretical criticism on Buddhism through his two main works: *On the Mind, Material Force and Principle* (心氣理篇, 1394) and *Arguments against Buddha* (佛氏雜辯, 1398). *On the Mind, Material Force and Principle* is a comparative study of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism from the point of view of Neo-Confucianism. Jeong argued in this book that Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians emphasize mind (心), material force (氣) and principle (理) respectively. He stressed that mind and material force cannot exist without principle.¹³ He argued that the most important values of Buddhism (mind), and Taoism (material force), and made them imperfect values. At the same time, he reinforced the status of Neo-Confucianism, which was needed for the new era, the Joseon dynasty. He also singled out the doctrines of Buddhism for more detailed criticism in his last work, *Arguments against Buddha*. In particular he vehemently criticized Buddhist knowledge theory that regarded the phenomenal world as an illusion (*Sambongjip*: 258–268).

Jeong Dojeon also had a significant influence on the discourse of principle and material force (理氣論). His understanding of principle was not different from that of succeeding generations of Neo-Confucian literati. In other words, Jeong was an orthodox Neo-Confucian. Jeong stated in *On the Mind, Material Force and Principle* that material force is derived from principle, and principle is the origin of one's mind as well. He finally asserted that principle is a pure virtue and an immutable law and pre-existing on heaven and earth.¹⁴ Joseon Neo-Confucians' understanding of principle and material force was based on Jeong Dojeon's works. Yu Choha argues that Joseon Neo-

¹³ Jeong, Dojeon, *Sambongjip*, 280–288.

¹⁴ Jeong, Dojeon, *Sambongjip*, 276–280.

Confucianism carefully divided principle and material force and emphasized the superiority of principle and its movement. The theory of principle movement is a distinctive feature based on the Chinese understanding of it.¹⁵ This ensured that Jeong Dojeon's Neo-Confucian intellectual works formed the very core rather than constituting a peripheral element of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. Therefore it is understandable that Jeong should have been enshrined given his orthodox and outstanding intellectual works.

Although he founded the main disciplines for Joseon Neo-Confucianism, Jeong Dojeon was undermined after his purge. King Sejong ordered the revision of the *Goryeosa* (高麗史, A History of the Goryeo Dynasty) since Jeong Dojeon was one of its main compilers.¹⁶ In the end Jeong was forbidden to speak publicly for the next four hundred years, and his rehabilitation was only ordered in 1865, the last phase of Joseon.¹⁷

While Jeong Dojeon was denigrated as a villainous courtier, Gwon Geun was recommended as the first candidate for enshrinement in 1419.¹⁸ Students of the National Academy (成均館, *Seonggungwan*) also asked for the enshrinement of Gwon Geun with Yi Jehyeon (李齊賢, 1287–1367) and Yi Saek (李穡, 1328–1396).¹⁹ At that moment the last enshrined sage was An Hyang (安珦, 1243–1306), who introduced Neo-Confucianism to the Goryeo dynasty. Yi Saek and Yi Jehyeon could fill the generational gap between An Hyang and Gwon Geun. In other words, those two Yis were recommended as students of the National Academy, the link between An Hyang

¹⁵ Yu, Choha, "Joseon Seongrihak Ironjeok Jeongcho," 42–49.

¹⁶ *Sejong Sillok*, 1419. 9. 20. 3.

¹⁷ *Gojong Sillok*, 1865. 9. 10. 3.

¹⁸ *Sejong Sillok*, 1419. 8. 6. 8.

¹⁹ *Sejong Sillok*, 1436. 5. 12. 6.

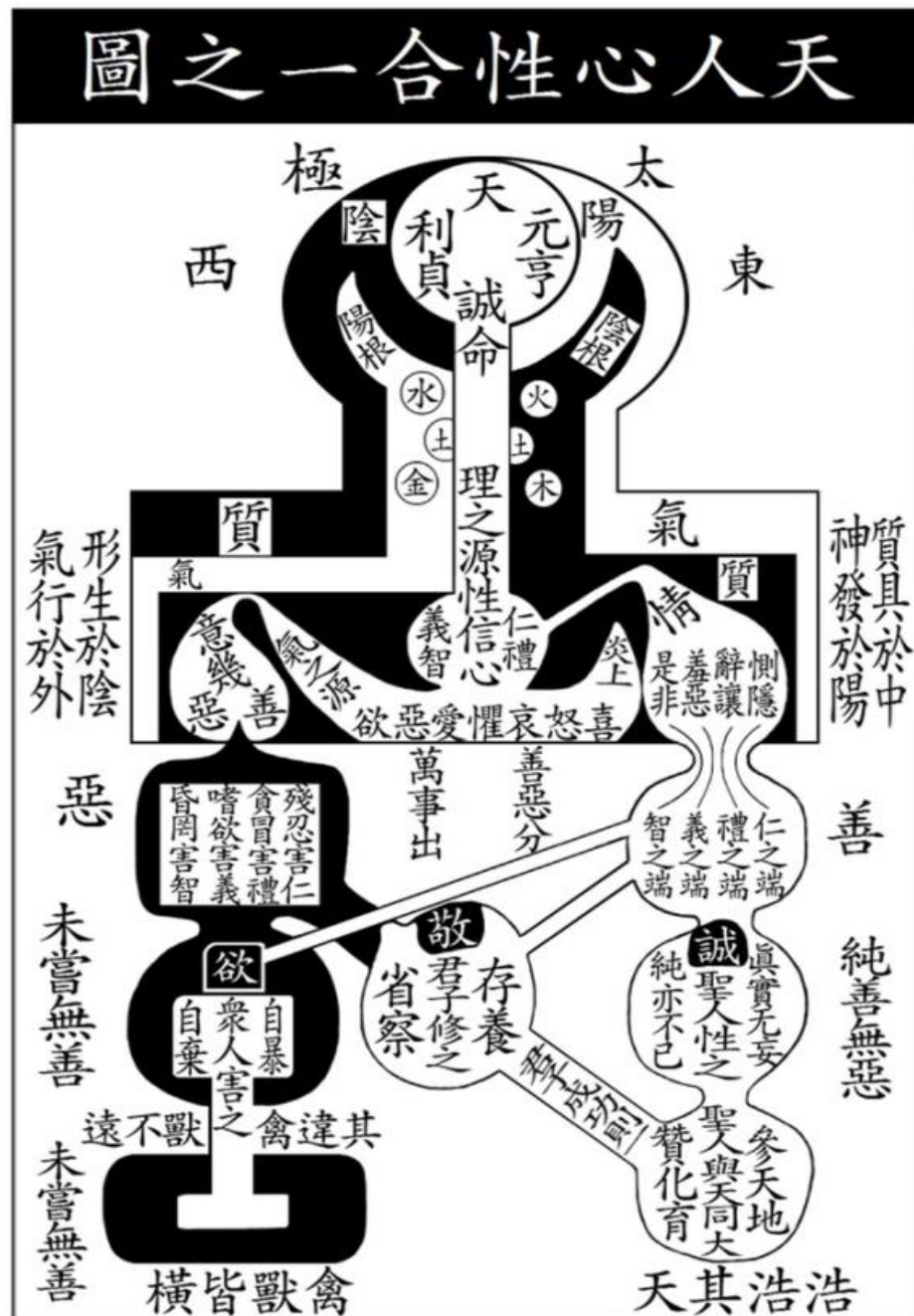
and Gwon Geun.

Gwon Geun's famous work, the *Diagrammatic Treatise for Entering Upon Learning* (入學圖說) was one of the earliest Joseon expositions of Neo-Confucian thought. It took Joseon scholars over 250 years to achieve an understanding of Neo-Confucianism sufficient to engage in the Four-Seven Debates (四端七情論爭).²⁰ He completed it in 1397, and then it was published fifty-five times in both Korea and Japan, due to its scholarly significance. It consisted of twenty-six diagrams, which covered the Five Classics (五更), Four Books (四書) and Song Neo-Confucian writings. Gwon wrote in *Diagrammatic Treatise for Entering Upon Learning* that human nature (性) is purely good and is furnished with all principles. Gwon also said that the principle of a man and that of an object are the same. The differences between them were caused by the variety of material force.²¹ One of Gwon's diagrams, "Heaven and Man, Mind and Nature, Combine as One (天人 心性 合一之圖)," in the *Diagrammatic Treatise for Entering Upon Learning* also had a significant meaning in Joseon Neo-Confucianism (see below Picture 2). Recent research on Joseon Neo-Confucianism has included a comparative study of Joseon Neo-Confucian cosmology with its Chinese counterpart. According to Jeong Daehwan's research, Chinese Neo-Confucians were mainly interested in cosmology rather than ontology. Zhou Dun Yi (周敦頤, 1017–1073) in *Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* (太極圖說) concentrated solely on the explanation of the creation of the universe by reference to the Supreme Ultimate (太極). The relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the human, or that between

²⁰ This debate is the most famous philosophy debate in the entire Joseon. It will be discussed in the final chapter; Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosun Dynasty*, 260.

²¹ Gwon, Geun, *Ipakdoseol*, 145–149.

principle and nature, was not Zhou's topic. However, Gwon Geun directly enquired into the union between Heaven and man, and nature and mind.



<Picture 2: Heaven and Man, Mind and Nature, Combine as One (天人 心性合一之圖)> in the *Diagrammatic Treatise for Entering Upon Learning* (入學圖說)>

It directly influenced Jeong Jiun's (鄭之雲, 1509 – 1651) *Diagram of Heaven's Will* (天命圖). Jeong Jiun started his book with the comment "What Heaven has conferred is called nature" (天命之謂性) (*Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 1). "What Heaven has conferred" indicates principle in conventional Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, Jeong's concern was also with the relationship between principle and nature or Heaven and the human being. Jeong's diagram also directly influenced Yi Hwang.²²

The relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the human finally became one of the main issues in the Horak Controversy (湖落論爭) in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, which will be discussed in chapter 5 in fuller detail. In the end, it is likely that Gwon's interest in the union between Heaven and human or nature and mind continued through to the final stages of Joseon intellectual trends.

However, Gwon Geun was eliminated from the candidate list during the reign of King Jungjong. Yi Jehyeon and Yi Saek of course were also excluded. Instead of the first three candidates, Gwon Geun, Yi Jehyeon and Yi Saek, Jeong Mongju (鄭夢周, 1337–1392) was suddenly recommended for the legitimate heirs.

It was Jeong Mongju who was once regarded as a ringleader of the *Jeong Mongju's Revolt*.²³ Until then, he was just one of the opponents of the Joseon dynasty. However, King Taejong began to hold Jeong Mongju in reverence to emphasize loyalty to his courtiers, even if he was his political opponent. In the end Jeong Mongju was conferred

²² Jeong, Daehwan, "Hugisarimpa," 99–113.

²³ *Jeongjong Sillok*, 1400. 2. 1. 1.

with the rank of prime minister posthumously.²⁴ Jeong's ascension seemed as if it would not to be stopped easily. During the reign of King Sejong, Jeong Mongju was exemplified as an example of loyalty (忠臣圖, *chungshindo*) in the book, *Samganghaengsildo* (三綱行實圖, Exemplars of the Three Moral Relationship).²⁵ Jeong Mongju was also discussed as a sage to be enshrined several times.²⁶ Ironically, Jeong Mongju, who opposed the Joseon dynasty and was purged for it, was the first sage to be enshrined in the Joseon dynasty, while Jeong Dojeon and Gwon Geun were not.²⁷

In intellectual terms it is hard to say that Jeong Dojeon was superior to Jeong Mongju, “the ancestor of the Eastern school of principle” (東方理學之宗).²⁸ His theoretical criticism of Buddhism was not original and was in fact similar to that of Song dynasty scholarship. In addition, Deuchler argues that Jeong Dojeon was not a very deep thinker,²⁹ and de Bary also agrees that Jeong Dojeon does not rank among the great philosophers of Korea.³⁰ On Kim Jajeom's (金自點, 1367–1433) memorial, however, Jeong Dojeon was estimated to be “as the only one true Neo-Confucian scholar.”³¹ Jeong Dojeon's contemporaries, like Pak Cho (朴礎, 1367–1454) and Gwon Junghwa (權仲和, 1322–1408) also praised Jeong Dojeon's faithful attitude to Neo-Confucianism. Pak Honggyu argues that Jeong Dojeon was intentionally neglected and excluded from the Neo-Confucian legitimate heir line by King Taejong, although Jeong

²⁴ *Taejong Sillok*, 1401. 11. 7. 1.

²⁵ *Sejong Sillok*, 1431. 11. 11. 2.

²⁶ *Sejo Sillok*, 1456. 3. 28. 3.

Seongjong Sillok, 1477. 7. 21. 4.

Jungjong Sillok, 1510. 10. 18. 1.

²⁷ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1517. 9. 17. 2.

²⁸ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1510. 10. 18. 1.

²⁹ Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 94.

³⁰ de Bary, “Introduction,” in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, 39.

³¹ *Goryeosa*, vol. 120, a series of biographies 33, Kim Jasu.

Mongju had been recognized generally as one of the Neo-Confucian legitimate heirs.³²

Jeong Dojeon's exclusion must have been for political reasons.

In the case of Gwon Geun, during the reign of King Jungjong both the Restoration group (反正功臣, *banjeonggongsin*) and the Neo-Confucian literati at that time seemed to loathe Gwon's swift ascension in the new dynasty. Although Jeong Mongju's intellectual works or influence cannot be verified, his stubborn resistance to the new dynasty satisfied the requirements of that time. It means that the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement did not remain solely in academic circles and moved to the realm of politics. Furthermore, it showed that loyalty had become one of the main virtues, and of more significance than intellectual achievements around the reign of King Jungjong³³.

Interestingly, the first Joseon enshrined figure was Jeong Mongju, who was killed by Joseon's founders. Jeong Mongju was once understood as a traitor. Jeong Dojeon, who was one of the main figures for the Joseon foundation, was neglected. The first Jeong was loyal to Goryeo, not to Joseon. The other Jeong was loyal to Joseon, not to Goryeo. However Joseon chose the first Jeong for their initial enshrined figure. These ironies will be discussed in the next section.

³² Park, Honggyu, "Jeong Dojeongwa Dotong," 151.

³³ More details of Jeong Mongju's enshrinement will be studied in the fourth section of this chapter.

1. 3. Merit Awarding System (功臣冊封)

It is time to study the merit awarding system, which was closely related to the concept of loyalty. Merit awards, especially after illegitimate Royal succession, were awarded to those who helped the current king take the throne. This was undertaken in order to keep courtiers loyal to illegitimate kings. However, the same courtiers would have been disloyal to the previous king. In this section, I analyze the relationship between the merit awarding system and loyalty.

The first reward was for the participants in the foundation of the Joseon dynasty. Therefore, most Joseon Neo-Confucian founders became meritorious courtiers through the first reward (開國功臣).³⁴ The next two merit awards, *Jeongsa Gongsin* (定社功臣)³⁵ and *Jwamyeong Gongsin* (佐命功臣)³⁶ were awarded after two fratricides.³⁷ Later five courtiers, Yi Hwa (李和, ?–1408), Yi Jiran (李之蘭, 1331–1402), Jo On (趙溫, 1347–1417), Jo Bak (趙璞, 1356–1408) and Jo Yeongmu (趙英茂, ?–1414) were awarded three times, and ten other courtiers were on double awards.³⁸

³⁴ *Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 8. 20. 2.

³⁵ *Jeongjong Sillok*, 1398. 9. 17. 2.

³⁶ *Taejong Sillok*, 1401. 1. 15. 2.

³⁷ King Taejo chose Yi Bangseok, the second son from the Queen who was his second wife (*Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 8. 20. 1). Yi Bangseok was just ten years old at the time and his main opponent and half-brother, Yi Bangwon was in his thirties. Yi Bangseok, the Crown Prince was finally killed and the other son from the Queen was also killed by half-brothers. The Queen's only daughter became a Buddhist nun and her husband was also killed. Fortunately or unfortunately the Queen, the second wife of King Taejo passed away two years before the massacre. The first fratricidal struggle was between halfbrothers but the second one was between the fourth and fifth sons from the first wife of King Taejo.

³⁸ *Taejong Sillok*, 1401. 1. 15. 2.

This meant that these double or triple merit courtiers were King Taejong's true loyalists. They were the founders of Joseon and joined the King Taejong's fratricide and King Taejong owed his kingship to them, yet he was too strong to be swayed easily. He wanted to strengthen regal authority and escape the shadow of his meritorious courtiers. As a first step he conferred the prime ministership on Jeong Mongju posthumously.³⁹ It was King Taejong who purged Jeong Mongju and Jeong Dojeon, but he praised Jeong Mongju in order to emphasize loyalty. He needed a loyal servant like Jeong Mongju, who faithfully served the declining Goryeo dynasty under any circumstance. He worried that one who once betrayed a king is likely to do so again. Strictly speaking, most courtiers, especially merit courtiers, betrayed their king more than once. They betrayed Goryeo and king Jeongjong. King Taejong needed an exemplary figure that served the king under any circumstance, and Jeong Mongju would be a good model of loyalty. At the same time King Taejong purged his meritorious courtiers and even potential political opponents of his son, King Sejong. Fortunately, these five triple awarding courtiers died natural deaths before 1418, the year of Taejong's abdication. King Taejong, however, purged his wife's four brothers and his son's father-in-law before he died. In the end most of the first generation of the meritorious courtiers was swept away before the enthronement of King Sejong.

There was no merit awards granted during the reign of King Sejong. His rule can be seen as marking a clear divide between the first and second merit courtiers. Of course there were some meritorious courtiers during the reign of King Sejong, but they were not a power group that operated against him. Famous among the courtiers of that time, Hwang Heui (黃喜, 1363–1452), Maeng Saseong (孟思誠, 1360–1438), Byeon

³⁹ *Taejong Sillok*, 1401. 11. 7. 1.

Gyeryang (卞季良, 1369–1430) and Heo Jo (許稠, 1369–1439), passed the civil service examination in 1389, 1386, 1385 and 1390 respectively, which was during the Goryeo dynasty. They served four consecutive kings from Taejo to Sejong and belonged to descent groups that had not distinguished themselves in late Goryeo.⁴⁰ They were somewhat disloyal to Goryeo since they passed Goryeo civil examinations and served Joseon. For the same reason Gwon Geun could have been recommended as the first candidate for the enshrinement during the reign of King Sejong.⁴¹ Gwon's swift joining of Joseon was not considered a defect at that time.

Loyalty, however, was emphasized again after Sejo's usurpation. Prince Suyang purged his nephew King Danjong (端宗, 1452–1455) and Danjong's loyalists. In the process of the usurpation, Prince Suyang, King Sejo (世祖, 1455–1468) granted the fourth merit award, *Jeongnan Gongsin* (靖難功臣) to forty-three merit servants.⁴² At the fifth merit award, *Jwaik Gongsin* (佐翼功臣) forty-four servants were awarded, and among them ten courtiers were awarded twice.⁴³ However, Sejo's kingship was still unstable and the trials of Danjong's restoration continued on. In this context Jeong Mongju, an icon of loyalty, was discussed as a sage to be enshrined once more.⁴⁴ Loyalty became a vital issue again. Ironically, a loyalist to Goryeo, Jeong Mongju was praised, but the Dead Six Loyalists to King Danjong (死六臣)⁴⁵ were purged.

⁴⁰ Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 97.

⁴¹ *Sejong Sillok*, 1419. 8. 6. 8.

⁴² *Danjong Sillok*, 1453. 10. 15. 2.

⁴³ *Sejo Sillok*, 1455. 9. 5. 1.

⁴⁴ *Sejo Sillok*, 1456. 3. 28. 3.

⁴⁵ Six loyalists, Seong Sammun, Pak Paengnyeon, Ha Wiji, Yi Gae, Yu Seongwon and Yu Eungbu tried to restore King Danjong. They were eventually discovered and purged. They are called the Dead Six Loyalists (*Sayuksin*, 死六臣). There were another six loyalist groups at that time. Just after Sejo's usurpation, Kim Siseup, Won Ho, Yi Maengjeon, Jo Ryeo, Seong Damsu and Nam Hyo-on renounced their appointments and remained in private life. They are called the Alive Six Loyalists (*Saengyuksin*, 生六臣).

The situation was similar to what pertained during the reigns of Taejong and Sejo, but there was a big difference between these two kings. King Taejong overcame his meritorious courtiers and purged most of them in order to ease the path for his successor. Far from sweeping away his meritorious courtiers, however, King Sejo awarded the seventh merit, *Jeokgae Gongsin* (敵愾功臣), to forty-four new servants one year before he died.⁴⁶ There must have been a possibility for the growth of a new power group among the meritorious courtiers. Of course there were malevolent practices among the meritorious courtiers, but King Sejo could not control them unlike Taejong. Loyalty becomes a meaningless mantra for the next fifty years. During the same period the discourse of the legitimate heirs was never discussed either.

The meritorious courtiers' corruption and extravagance reached its peak during the reign of King Seongjong. Normally a first grade merit courtier received about two hundred *gyeol* (結), and one *gyeol* is about nine thousand square metres. They were bound to one another by an expanding network of interrelationships through marriage, which included numerous and close marriage ties with the Royal house. Moreover, they took part in many of the government's national budgets and projects. There was also been a secret understanding that King Seongjong shut his eyes to the meritorious courtiers' depravity. In fact censorial courtiers sent a memorial detailing other courtiers' extravagance several times. The Inspector-general Han Chihyeong (韓致亨, 1434–1502) said –

⁴⁶ *Sejo Sillok*, 1467. 9. 20. 5.

Houses of the commonalty are bigger than those of the courtiers and those of the courtiers are more luxurious than the palace. Once King Sejong prohibited extravagant manners and restricted the size of houses according to his status, and the oversized house was removed. So please announce and reinforce the law and prevent extravagant manners.

(*Seongjong Sillok*, 1471. 6. 8. 3)

It is said that every cloud has a silver lining. The new generation, that is the Neo-Confucian literati, emerged during the era of the meritorious courtiers' corruption. The power game between the existing merit courtiers and the new rising Neo-Confucian literati was expected. It is the right moment to turn our attention to study the Literati Purges (士禍).

1. 4. Literati Purges

Various purges emerged out of the political power games between different groups throughout the whole Joseon era. However, the four purges in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century are grouped under the name of 'The Four Literati Purges' (四大士禍). This term implies that the victims of the Literati Purges were literati, and the opponents, non-literati, yet ironically, the victims of the Literati Purges, the Neo-Confucian literati, took political power, which they maintained for more than two hundred years. For the following two hundred years purges still occurred but these were just power games among the literati. Both the victimized group and their opponents were literati. Therefore later purges were instead known by various other names; *oksa* (獄死, death in

prison) and *muok* (誣獄, false treason case), *hwanguk* (換局, change of power), and so forth. In the case of these later purges, the victimized group would call the event a 'literati purge' to signify their innocence and their rival's wrongs.

Not all of the Four Literati Purges were the results of power games between the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati. This section will classify the first two purges and scrutinize the third purge, the *Gimyo Sahwa* (己卯史禍, The Purge of 1519) as a power game between the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati.

The root of the first purge, *Muo Sahwa* (戊午士禍; The Purge of 1498) was said to be based on two figures' personal grudge against each other; the first figure was Yi Geukdon (李克墩, 1435-1503) from the meritorious courtiers, and another, Kim Ilson (金駙孫, 1464-1498) from the Neo-Confucian literati. The main issue of the *Muo Sahwa* was said to be Kim's draft history (*Sacho*, 史草). Since the first sound in Korean of these two words, *Sahwa* and *Sacho*, are the same, the first Literati Purge was instead written as *Sahwa* (史禍).⁴⁷ But the real backdrop of the first purge was more complicated than that.

The first moment of the *Muo Sahwa* was secretly planned as always happens in such circumstances. Yun Pilsang (尹弼商, 1427–1504), No Sasin (盧思愼, 1427–1498), Han Chihyeong and Yu Jagwang (柳子光, 1439–1512) contrived to send a private memorial to King Yeonsangun. There is no clear document detailing their conversations since they forbade a historian from being among them. After their closed-door session the State

⁴⁷ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1507. 6. 2. 5.

Tribunal (義禁府) officers were dispatched to Gyeongsang Province (慶尙道). No one knew what the State Tribunal officers' mission was for a while.⁴⁸ For the following ten days there was no significant change in normal circumstances. The *Muo Sahwa* really began once the Tribunal officers came back with Kim Ilson.⁴⁹ From that day to the final announcement of the punishment took just two weeks.

The ostensible reason for *Muo Sahwa* was apparently Kim Ilson's draft history. As a formal historian Kim Ilson just compiled draft history for the compilation of King Seongjong's annals. Among these drafts was an account of Yi Geukdon's personal wrongdoing. Yi Geukdon privately asked Kim to erase Yi's wrongdoing, but Kim refused his request. For this Yi scrutinized history drafts to find fault with Kim Ilson's mistakes. Among a mountain of drafts Yi found Kim Ilson's teacher, Kim Jongjik's (金宗直, 1431–1492) *Joeuijemun* (弔義帝文)⁵⁰. When Yi Geukdon discovered this, he sensed an opportunity to take revenge. Kim Jongjik's *Joeuijemun* implied that King Sejo usurped the throne. The matter was that all kings after King Sejo were King Sejo's lineage including Yeonsangun. It was enough to be accused of treason.

Although Kim Jongjik's *Joeuijemun* was just the cause, the real target of the purge was the *Samsa* (三司).⁵¹ The *Samsa* was the organ of public opinion in the Joseon court. *Samsa* was not a particular name of an office but a compilation of three different offices' titles; *Saheonbu* (司憲府, the Office of the Inspector-General), *Saganwon*

⁴⁸ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1498. 7. 1. 2.

⁴⁹ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1498. 7. 11. 1.

⁵⁰ This is a lamentation of Emperor Yi (義帝, ?–206 BC) of Chu (楚, ?–223 BC) murdered by Xiang Yu (項羽, 232–202 BC). This lamentation would imply that King Sejo murdered King Danjong like Xiang Yu did Emperor Yi. It was written in 1457 but was not an issue during the reign of King Sejo. The writer Kim Jongjik had already died in 1492.

⁵¹ Wagner, *The Literati Purges*, 23–50.

(司諫院, the Office of the Censor-General), *Hongmungwan* (弘文館, the Office of Special Counsellors). According to Wagner's research, the completion of the *Gyeonggukdaejeon* (經國大典, Joseon's National Code) provided protection for censoring courtiers, even from a king, for Joseon's censoring system, the *Samsa*. These offices were filled with young, newly emerged literati. More strictly speaking, these offices were the gateway to success in public life for young people, especially Neo-Confucian literati. Their challenge was directed at the older, experienced and higher echelons of the court, especially the meritorious courtiers. Under these circumstances the *Samsa*'s young courtiers were thorns in the sides of both the King and meritorious courtiers.⁵²

In addition the scale of the punishment imposed during the first purge alarmed the rising literati. The whole period of the *Muo Sahwa* was less than a month and the victims were few in number. Only six figures were purged, thirty-one figures were exiled and fifteen were dismissed.⁵³ One of the interesting aspects of the episode was that Yi Geukdon was also dismissed.⁵⁴ The next day, Yeonsangun ordered Kim Jongjik's corpse to be dug up and beheaded (剖棺斬屍).⁵⁵ Among Kim Jongjik's followers, however, only twenty-four members were on the punishment list. The twenty-six figures on the punishment list were from the *Samsa*. There was an interesting episode in the *Sillok*, which was one year before the *Muo Sahwa*. Yi Gwa (李穎, 1475–1507) who stated, "nowadays, you (King) give no ear to (*Samsa*'s) expostulations. I worry that you will finally order the purging of the Censor-Officers."⁵⁶ It was not alarmism. The main target of the first

⁵² Wagner, *The Literati Purges*, 23–25.

⁵³ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1498. 7. 26. 4.

⁵⁴ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1498. 7. 26. 5.

⁵⁵ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1498. 7. 27. 1.

⁵⁶ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1497. 8. 4. 1.

purge was apparently *Samsa* and Kim Jongjik's followers.

The scale and characteristics of the second purge, *Gapja Sahwa* (甲子史禍, The Purge of 1504) was totally different from the first purge, *Muo Sahwa*. The first purge was just the King sounding an alarm as well as the meritorious courtiers acting in league with the rising censor system. However, the second purge was King Yeonsangun's personal revenge on all courtiers, even the investigators of the first purge. In the final tally 239 courtiers were purged, and the punishment was harsh. Yeonsangun ordered *Bugwanchamsi* (剖棺斬屍), *Choncham* (寸斬, to kill a criminal's father and brothers), *Pagajeotaek* (破家潛宅, to demolish a criminal's house and make it a pond) and *Swaigolpyopung* (碎骨飄風, to grind a criminal's bones and blow it on the air).

The root of the second purge grew from a trivial thing. Once the Minister of Rites (禮曹判書) *Yi Sejwa* (李世佐, 1445–1504) spilled a glass of wine on the King at a banquet.⁵⁷ In another incident, Hong Gwidal (洪貴達, 1438–1504) gracefully refused the King's order to present Hong's granddaughter at the royal Court.⁵⁸ These two cases gave King Yeonsangun a cause to act. However, there was another reason. King Yeonsangun eventually found out that his real mother was executed for poisoning. He was later told of the details of his mother's death and was presented with a piece of clothing stained with blood vomited by her in reaction to her poisoning. He killed two of King Seongjong's concubines who were responsible for her murder, and then ordered the execution of those officials who supported his mother's death. In the meantime he out found that Yi Sejwa and Hong Gwidal were the main figures behind his mother's

⁵⁷ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1503. 9. 11. 1.

⁵⁸ *Yeonsangun Ilgi*, 1504. 3. 11. 3.

death. Hong was one of the most powerful figures when his mother was dethroned and Yi was main official behind the poisoning of his mother.⁵⁹ Yeonsangun tied Yi Sejwa's and Hong Gwidal's cases together and opened up the third literati purge. His harsh punishment struck the meritorious courtiers since most of King Seongjong's meritorious courtiers were involved in his mother's enthronement and poisoning. This demonstrates that the second purge was not a power game between the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati but King's massacre of his courtiers. The main victims of the *Gapja Sahwa* were the meritorious courtiers.

1. 5. Gimyo Sahwa (己卯士禍) and Jo Gwangjo

The second literati purge, *Gapja Sahwa* was directly caused by the first Joseon's restoration. In 1506 Yeonsangun's favourite retainers, the survivors of the second purge, apparently led the Jungjong Restoration (中宗反正). They used Yeonsangun's eccentric conduct to justify the restoration, but the main reason behind it was their fear. They could be the next victims of any further political purges at any point during Yeonsangun's inconsistent kingship.⁶⁰ In other words, fearful courtiers replaced their king with the king's half-brother. Ironically, however, loyalty became one of the main topics after the Jungjong Restoration. As mentioned previously, for the fifty years preceding loyalty had become an empty rhetoric and the language of the legitimate heirs had also never been discussed.

King Jungjong emphasized loyalty, but the Jungjong Restoration group could not be free from the guilt associated with the restoration. On the other hand, King Jungjong did

⁵⁹ *Seongjong Sillok*: 1479. 6. 2. 1 / 1482. 8. 16. 1.

⁶⁰ Yun, Jeong, "Joseon Jungjong Jeonbangi Jeonggukgudowa Jeongchaekron," 142.

not know when he might be dethroned like his half-brother, Yeonsangun. Loyalty had become a political hot potato. King Jungjong tried to find political partners to fight against the Restoration group, and the Neo-Confucian literati satisfied this need. Of course, the Neo-Confucian literati's main weapon was loyalty as they did not have enough political power to impose loyalty on the Restoration group yet. Their assertion that the past needs to be re-evaluated was mainly materialized through the discourse of legitimate heirs and enshrinement.⁶¹

The new requirement for the enshrinement needed to be revised given the new circumstances. The fresh Neo-Confucian literati generation of the sixteenth century excluded from the existing legitimate lineage of Yi Jehyeon and Yi Saek to Gwon Geun. Gwon Geun was disqualified since he joined the foundation of the new dynasty from the beginning. It meant that he was not a loyalist to the Goryeo dynasty although he was one of the major founders of the Joseon dynasty. Gwon's loyalty to the Joseon dynasty, ironically, became his weakness, and he was never discussed as a legitimate heir again. The link between An Hyang and Gwon Geun, Yi Jehyeon and Yi Saek, had of course disappeared. After the Jungjong Restoration one's loyalty became a more decisive factor than any other. As the Neo-Confucian literati did not directly apply their view of loyalty to the Restoration group, the Jungjong Restoration group also agreed with their view, although loyalty was the Jungjong Restoration group's Achilles' heel. There seemed to be a tacit agreement between the Jungjong Restoration group and Neo-Confucian literati.

One figure, however, changed the mood of reconciliation. It was Jo Gwangjo who

⁶¹ Jin, Saingwon, "Joseonjunggi Dohakeui Jeongtonggyebo Seongripgwa Munmyojongsa," 153 – 154.

recklessly drove forward the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement. First Jo suggested his teacher Kim Goengpil (1454–1504), who was one of the victims of the *Muo Sahwa*, be appointed a legitimate heir. He added Seong Sammun (1418–1456) and Pak Paengnyeon (1417–1456), who had both tried to restore King Danjong.⁶² Their names were too feared to be spoken publicly at that time. Therefore, Jo Gwangjo put Jeong Mongju on the candidate list for enshrinement, which was regarded as a loyalist but not yet enshrined, to dilute the dangerous circumstances and gather support.⁶³ However, Jo's political opponents began to suspect that he would organize a political party through his teacher Kim Goengpil's enshrinement. Jo's opponents admitted Jeong Mongju's enshrinement but tried to break the connection between Jeong and Kim. They said that "it is natural to enshrine Jeong Mongju, but Kim Goengpil is disqualified since he has insufficient academic works."⁶⁴ Three days later, Jo's opponents began to oppose Jeong's enshrinement as well.⁶⁵ They wanted to deny Jo's legitimate lineage itself, which was from Jeong Mongju to Kim Goengpil. King Jungjong, however, apparently said that he wanted both Jeong Mongju and Kim Geongpil to be enshrined. On the same day, the issue of their enshrinement was discussed four times.⁶⁶ Two days later, high officials advanced their opinion that only Jeong Mongju should be enshrined. In compensation for the exclusion of Kim Geongpil, it was argued it would be better to give a higher position to Kim Geongpil posthumously. At this time Kim's student Jeong Yechang (鄭汝昌, 1450–1504), who was also one of the victims of *Muo Sahwa*, was discussed together for the first time. The recommendation of Jeong Yechang was very sudden. There seemed to be a kind of negotiation between Jo's group and his opponents

⁶² *Jungjong Sillok*, 1517. 8. 8. 1.

⁶³ Jin, Sangwon, "Joseonjunggi Dohakeui Jeongtonggyebo Seongrip-gwa Munmyojongsa," 154.

⁶⁴ *Jungjong Sillok*: 1517. 8. 9. 3.

⁶⁵ *Jungjong Sillok*: 1517. 8. 12. 1.

⁶⁶ *Jungjong Sillok*: 1517. 8. 18. 1 / 3 / 6 / 7.

since Jo's group did not say anything of Kim Geongpil's exclusion on that day.⁶⁷ Jo used Jeong Mongju to advance his teacher Kim Geongpil's enshrinement, but only Jeong Mongju was finally enshrined after the compromise between Jo's group and his opponents.⁶⁸ Under this tacit political agreement Jeong Mongju became the first figure to be enshrined in the Joseon dynasty.

Jo Gwangjo, however, was persistent and he developed a new plan to enshrine Kim Geongpil. Between Kim Geongpil and Jeong Mongju there was a three generation gap. Jo included Gil Jae and Kim Jongjik on the list to fill up the gaps between them.⁶⁹ Gil Jae had never been discussed as a legitimate heir, although he was recorded as an exemplar of loyalty in the book, *Samganghaengsildo* along with Jeong Mongju. Gil must have been recommended merely for being the link between Jeong Mongju and Kim Goengpil.⁷⁰ Gil passed the civil examination in 1389 and served as a low ranking official for just one year in the Goryeo dynasty. His public career, position and reputation in the Goryeo dynasty were not so high. However, Gil had been in mourning for three years when he heard of Goryeo King U's (1365–1389) demise. Gil also said to his son, "You must serve a king of the Joseon dynasty with sincerity like I did to the Goryeo dynasty."⁷¹ In addition, there were many other Goryeo loyalists other than Gil Jae, for example, the '*Dumundong* Seventy-two Sages.'⁷² Moreover Gil did not leave any significant academic works.

The third literati purge, *Gimyo Sahwa* (the literati purge of 1519) suddenly broke out

⁶⁷ *Jungjong Sillok*: 1517. 8. 20. 7.

⁶⁸ *Jungjong Sillok*: 1517. 9. 17. 2.

⁶⁹ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1518. 4. 28. 3.

⁷⁰ Jin, Sangwon, "Joseonjunggi Dohakeui Jeongtonggyebo Seongrip-gwa Munmyojongsa," 156–162.

⁷¹ *Sejong Sillok*, 1419. 4. 12. 4.

⁷² The seventy-two sages gathered in the Dumundong around Gaeseong, the capital of the Goryeo, and were opposed to joining the new dynasty until the end.

and stopped all Jo's political plan. In fact Jo Gwangjo had enjoyed such complete confidence of King Jungjong and became an Inspector General only four years after entering the court in a series of unprecedented promotions. But Jo's uncompromising character generated fierce hostility and resistance of the meritorious courtiers. He also made many political enemies by impeaching many of the Restoration group. Even King Jungjong began to be irritated at Jo's radical program. Finally Jungjong privately contacted some of Jo's political enemies, the meritorious courtiers, and planned to orchestrate the downfall Jo's group around midnight.⁷³ The author of the third literati purge was King Jungjong and the supporting roles were filled by the meritorious courtiers. Of course the victims were the Neo-Confucian literati including Jo Gwangjo.

The most important moment of the private plan, which set out to slander Jo Gwangjo, was omitted in the *Jungjong Sillok*, but, fifty years later it was added in the *Seonjo Sillok*. According to the *Seonjo Sillok*, Nam Gon (南袞, 1471–1527) wrote “*Juchowiwang* (走肖爲王, Ju Cho will become the King) with honey on mulberry leaves. Caterpillars left behind this phrase on leaves. Nam Gon floated the leaf on the water heading to the Royal Palace. ‘Accidentally’ it was presented to King Jungjong.”⁷⁴ When two Chinese characters “Ju” (走) and “Cho” (肖) are put together, they form a new character, “Jo” (趙), Jo Gwangjo's first name. It was said to be a kind of heavenly warning. Their target was obvious from the first instance.

⁷³ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1519. 11. 15. 3.

⁷⁴ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1568. 9. 21. 2.



<Picture 3: Jo Gwangjo's Tomb, Suji Yonginsi Gyeonggido>

Jo Gwangjo was purged at once, which took a month from the first moment he was accused to his death. Only seven other figures were exiled.⁷⁵ The third literati purge was understood as a political power game between the meritorious courtiers and Neo-Confucian literati but, more strictly speaking, the only opponent was Jo Gwangjo. Other members of Jo's group were demoted and Jo's main opponent promoted to a key position.⁷⁶ The purge was concluded in a month.

For the rest of King Jungjong's reign Jo Gwangjo was still a hot issue in the court. On King Jungjong's demise, the vindication movement of Jo was seriously dealt with at court. Now Kim Sukja, Kim Jongjik's father, appeared as the new link between Gil Jae

⁷⁵ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1519. 12. 16. 2.

⁷⁶ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1519. 12. 17. 5.

and Kim Jongjik.⁷⁷ The twelfth King Injong (1544–1545) appointed Yi Eonjeok and other famous Neo-Confucian literati to high positions.⁷⁸ It seemed that the Neo-Confucian literati's dreams had come true. However, King Injong's reign was very brief. He barely ordered the vindication of Jo on his deathbed, just two days before his demise.⁷⁹ The real vindication of Jo depended on the next King. When the thirteenth King Myeongjong (明宗, 1545-1567) ascended the throne, he was only twelve years old. His mother, the Queen Dowager Yun's (1501–1565) perspective was different from her husband, King Injong. The fourth literati purge, *Eulsa Sahwa* (乙巳士禍, The Literati Purge of 1545) then took place. The vindication of Jo became invalid, and the morale of the Neo-Confucian literati declined again.

The fourth literati purge, *Eulsa Sahwa*, was a typical political struggle for the throne and a long-term power game. The background of the struggle for the throne traces back to the reign of King Jungjong. King Jungjong had three Queen Consorts. The first Queen Consort Sin (1487–1557) was Sin Suguen's (愼守勤, 1450–1506) daughter, one of the main courtiers of the Yeonsangun. Once the Jungjong Restoration was complete, Sin was immediately dethroned.⁸⁰ Then Yun Yeopil (尹汝弼, 1466–1555) made his daughter the second Queen Consort.⁸¹ However, Queen consort Yoon (1491–1515) died just six days after giving birth to her son, the Crown Prince.⁸² Two years later, the third Queen Consort Yun (1501–1506) was presented at court.⁸³ She was Yun Jiim's (尹之任, ?-1534) daughter and the famous Queen Dowager Yun, *Munjeong Wanghu* (文定王后).

⁷⁷ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 3. 13. 3.

⁷⁸ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 1. 13. 5.

⁷⁹ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 6. 29. 7.

⁸⁰ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1506. 9. 2. 6.

⁸¹ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1507. 6. 17. 1.

⁸² *Jungjong Sillok*, 1515. 3. 2. 1.

⁸³ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1517. 3. 15. 3.

The matter was that the third Queen had given birth to a son. The deceased second Queen Consort Yoon's brother, the Crown Prince's uncle, Yun Im (尹任, 1487–1545) protected his nephew against the third Queen Consort Yoon's supporters, and finally made the Crown Prince the King Injong. Unfortunately, King Injong's reign was brief. After his death, the third Queen Consort Yoon's son ascended to the throne, King Myeongjong (1545–1567). His mother, Queen Dowager Yoon, helped him to “manage state affairs from behind the veil” (垂簾聽政) and his uncle Yoon Wonhyeong (尹元衡, 1509–1565) wielded enormous power. Yoon Im's group was called the Greater Yoon Faction (大尹) and the other Yoon Wonhyeong group, the Lesser Yoon Faction (小尹). The fourth literati purge was a political struggle between these two Yoon factions, the Greater and Lesser Yoon factions. Over the next five years the Lesser Yoon included more than one hundred figures including many other Neo-Confucian literati. In the ensuing power struggle, Yoon Wonhyeong killed one of the Lesser Yoon faction members, his older brother Yoon Wonro (尹元老, ?–1547).⁸⁴ Only the death of the Queen Dowager Yun could stop the incessant purges. On Queen Myeongjong's death in 1565, Myeongjong could exile Yoon Wonhyeong⁸⁵ and govern by recruiting young talented figures, but his reign was only to last two years.

The matter of Jo Gwangjo's vindication finally re-emerged in the reign of King Seonjo (宣祖, 1567–1608). Amazingly, even before he was vindicated, Jo was recommended as an enshrined sage in the first year of King Seonjo's reign.⁸⁶ King Seonjo agreed to vindicate Jo but hesitated to enshrine him in the end. The discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement became one of the main issues in Seonjo's court as was the case

⁸⁴ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1547. 12. 26. 1.

⁸⁵ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1565. 8. 27. 2.

⁸⁶ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1568. 4. 4. 1.

in King Jungjong's, which took about fifty years after Jo's purge. The Neo-Confucian literati recommended Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochoang, Jo Gwangjo and Yi Eonjeok be enshrined.⁸⁷ King Seonjo understood the meaning of enshrinement for them. If King Seonjo agreed to enshrine them, they would become sages like Confucius. It meant that they would become higher than a king. Seonjo's power would be restricted after their enshrinement. Each time Neo-Confucian literati asked for enshrinements, King Seonjo conferred high official with ranks posthumously but did not approve to enshrine them until his death.

King Seonjo's second son, Gwanghaegun (光海君, 1608–1623) ascended to the throne although his old brother Imhaegun (臨海君, 1574–1609) was still alive. Therefore, his kingship was relatively weak and the Neo-Confucian literati vigorously requested enshrining the four figures Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochoang, Jo Gwangjo and Yi Eonjeok. Gwanghaegun also understood the true importance of their enshrinement so he strongly prohibited a memorial of their enshrinement from being presented to the throne.⁸⁸ Nevertheless the Neo-Confucian literati presented a memorial to the throne again and again, over thirty times in a single month.⁸⁹ It was a power game between Gwanghaegun and Neo-Confucians. In the end Gwanghaegun agreed to enshrine Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochoang, Jo Gwangjo, Yi Eonjeok and Yi Hwang (1501–1570).⁹⁰ The existing candidates, Gil Jae, Kim Sukja and Kim Jongjik, disappeared. These three figures were not needed anymore since Kim Geongpil and Jo Gwangjo were enshrined.

These final five figures, Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochoang, Jo Gwangjo, Yi Eonjeok and

⁸⁷ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1570. 4. 23. 1.

⁸⁸ *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*, 1610. 3. 1. 6.

⁸⁹ *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*, 1610. 4. 24—5. 28.

⁹⁰ *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*, 1610. 9. 5. 7.

Yi Hwang demonstrated a significant change in the requirement to be made legitimate heirs and become enshrined. Firstly, the cases of the first three figures, Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochang and Jo Gwangjo, and the last two figures, Yi Eonjeok and Yi Hwang should be understood separately. The requirement of the first three seems not to be ascribable to their intellectual achievements since their intellectual works were no better than other disqualified figures, such as Jeong Dojeon, Gwon Geun. In addition, the requirement of the three figures seems not to have been based on their loyalty either, since another disqualified figure, Gil Jae, might have been more loyal. The enshrinement for the first three figures apparently demonstrated the Neo-Confucian literati's final political conquest. At the time there were no political opponents, like the meritorious courtiers or a maternal relative power group, anymore. Therefore the Neo-Confucian literati could use their political advantage and deploy their political status to promote Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochang and Jo Gwangjo's enshrinement. On the other hand, the last two enshrined figures, Yi Eonjeok and Yi Hwang, had a different meaning. It was Yi Hwang and Gi Daeseung (奇大升, 1527–1572) who led the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement during the reign of King Seonjo. After Yi Hwang's death, Yi Hwang was also added to the enshrined list. The Neo-Confucian literati of the early seventeenth century further deepened the understanding of Neo-Confucianism through the Four-Seven Debate between Yi Hwang and Gi Daeseung. After the Four-Seven Debate they wanted to show the maturity of Joseon Neo-Confucianism through the two Yis' enshrinement. The discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement finally legitimated the Neo-Confucian literati's age in practice and in theory.

In conclusion, the Neo-Confucian literati knew how to use the discourses of legitimate

heirs and enshrinement for their political advantage, despite turbulent political circumstances. They proposed different candidates according to the context and finally demonstrated their practical and theoretical accomplishments by the enshrinement of these five figures. Although the discourse lasted for a hundred years with a significant break, the reason why the discourse marks the birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism is discussed in the next section.

1.6. Meanings of the Discourse of the Legitimate Heirs and Joseon Neo-Confucianism

In this final section the meaning of the Neo-Confucian literati's final conquest is studied in order to explain the reason why the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement can be seen as marking the true birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. The influence of the discourse on late Joseon intellectual trends is also analyzed.

The discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement exemplified four major intellectual developments. First, it was the Neo-Confucian literati's discourse from beginning to end, and they led the discourse and knew how to turn it to their advantage. Before the Neo-Confucian literati appeared, the discourse remained mainly in the intellectual realm. Even when it was used for political propaganda, it was not a crucial political issue at court. Neo-Confucian literati, however, drew the discourse into the centre of the court and made it a vital issue. Jo Gwangjo showed that the discourse could be an effective weapon to gain competitive advantage at court. The enshrinement of one's teacher began to be acknowledged as a proper and efficient method to establish

one's political status. Before Jo Gwangjo's usage of it, the discourse was used mainly to emphasize loyalty to unspecified courtiers. However Jo's first recommendation of his teacher, Kim Geongpil, was tinged with a specific political intention. Of course Jo's opponents understood his plan and tried to frustrate it. Jo and his group, however, carried on the discourse using their original plan. As the discourse went on, it became a disadvantage for Jo's opponents since they had no teachers even to recommend, and his opponents had to stop the discourse itself and succeeded by eliminating Jo from the court. For a while – strictly speaking for the next fifty years – the discourse stopped after the *Gimyo Sahwa*. The Neo-Confucian literati seemed to be defeated, they remobilised the discourse to promote their revival. The final enshrined figures, from Kim Geongpil to Yi Hwang, meant that the Neo-Confucian literati's age of prominence had begun.

Second, the discourse presented a new system by which to evaluate a certain figure or party. The existing merit award system evaluated one's merits or his father's merits. However, the discourse identified a figure or party as legitimate heirs through the evaluation of their teachers. There were no practical or economic benefits, unlike the merit awarding system. In addition, the discourse evaluated one's teacher and not oneself. It meant that one wanted to be evaluated not in terms of themselves, but by one's teachers, and not by one's ability but by one's legitimacy in Neo-Confucian terms. It was a totally new system by which to evaluate a figure or party. What is more, the Neo-Confucian literati applied the new valuation system to judge the past. Jo Gwangjo recommended Seong Sammun and Pak Paengnyeon for enshrinement. Seong and Pak were King Danjong's loyalists, but to King Sejo they were traitors. It was a delicate issue since all kings after King Sejo were Sejo's descendants. If King Jungjong chose

Seong and Pak for enshrinement, he would be saying that Seong and Pak were right and King Sejo was wrong. To reject a preceding king's decision was not an easy business. Kim Geongpil and Jeong Yeochoang were also victims of *Muo Sahwa*. Jo Gwangjo was also a victim of *Gimyo Sahwa*. However these three figures, Kim, Jeong and Jo, were finally enshrined. It meant that the literati purges were wrong and these three figures were innocent victims. Through the discourse of legitimate heirs and enshrinement Joseon Neo-Confucian developed a new system to evaluate a figure, the Neo-Confucian legitimacy, which applied from the past to the future.

Third, changes to the requirement for enshrinement become a reliable method by which to understand Joseon at particular moments in time. The dual requirements of the last enshrined figures clearly demonstrated that the Neo-Confucian literati's age had come. Roughly speaking, these changes in enshrinement's requirements can be divided into four stages. The first stage was before Jo Gwangjo's recommendation. One of the first candidates was Gwon Geun. Gwon left significant intellectual works as the author of the *Iphakdoseol*. The criterion of the first stage was a figure's intellectual legacy. At the second stage, one of the main figures was Jeong Mongju. After his first recommendation Jeong remained as an icon of loyalty. Of course, the requirement at that time was loyalty. However, under the meritorious awarding system, loyalty was meaningless for the next forty years, from King Sejo's death to the Jungjong Restoration.

The Jungjong Restoration required loyalty once again and Jeong Mongju was still recognized as an icon of loyalty at that time. Despite the fact that Jeong was loyal only to Goryeo and not to the Joseon dynasty, he was, ironically, the first enshrined figure

under the requirement of loyalty during the Joseon dynasty. At the third stage, however, the main figure was Jo Gwangjo's teacher Kim Geongpil. Jo tried to establish his group's political advantage through the enshrinement of Kim Geongpil. The discourse was drawn into the centre of the court by Jo's plan. Jo's political intention was one of the main requirements of the third stage. At the last stage, the final five figures, Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochoang, Jo Gwangjo, Yi Eonjeok and Yi Hwang were enshrined together. The Neo-Confucian literati in the early seventeenth century applied a dual standard to the five figures, and standards were intended to confirm the legitimacy of both the Neo-Confucian literati and Neo-Confucianism. Although the first three figures could not satisfy the higher intellectual standard, the Neo-Confucian literati of the time could acquire political legitimacy through their teachers' enshrinement. Through Yi Eonjeok and Yi Hwang's enshrinement they displayed their intellectual pride.

Finally, the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement had a deep influence on the following intellectual trends. First, the discourse was more exclusive than the existing merit awarding system. A merit could be awarded to many people at the same time, even to political enemies. After the Jungjong Restoration, the Restoration group shared merits with their political enemies. However, legitimacy could not be shared with political and even intellectual opponents. The following generation of Neo-Confucian literati had a tendency toward establishing their prestige. Unlike the merit awarding system, legitimacy was not shareable even between the subgroups of the Neo-Confucian literati. This can be understood as the catalyst for the formation of factions, which was a political form typical of the late Joseon dynasty. Second, the late Joseon Neo-Confucian literati learned that loyalty could transcend a kingship and even a dynasty. It was Jeong Mongju who was first enshrined in the Joseon dynasty, despite his

opposition to it. Jeong Dojeon and Gwon Geun were excluded although they were the founders of the Joseon dynasty. Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeochoang and Jo Gwangjo were purged but vindicated and enshrined in the end. Jeong Mongju and Jo Gwangjo's stubborn or uncompromising attitude concerning adherence to Neo-Confucian principles, the latter being a model for succeeding generations of Neo-Confucians. During the *Byeongja* war (Qing's invasion in 1636) most Neo-Confucian literati argued the need to fight Qing until death. It seems that they were not afraid of the dynasty falling. On the contrary, they would have been afraid of compromising with reality or breaking Neo-Confucian doctrine. Their attitudes seem to be impractical and abstruse, but it would be likely that a dynasty could rise and fall at any time, but the principles of Neo-Confucianism were eternal. The next Neo-Confucian generation learned this through its discourse. This thesis will study further how one of the characteristics of late Joseon intellectual trends, the uncompromising adherence to Neo-Confucianism, played a role in its later years.

Four main meanings of the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement were analysed here: the Neo-Confucian literati's originality, the adoption of a new evaluation system, a dual standard for political and Neo-Confucian legitimacy and the influence on exerted by these on the following generations. Although it lasted for a hundred years with a significant pause, I argue that the discourse marks the true birth of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. The pause will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Under the merit awarding system politicians could share status with their political opponents. However, under the discourse of legitimacy heirs, Neo-Confucian legitimacy could not be shared with political opponents any longer since Neo-Confucian legitimacy had to be kept in one unbroken line. This is why – despite arguments that the Injo Restoration signalled the birth of the late Joseon intellectual trends⁹¹ – I argue that the Injo Restoration was a power shift from the Northerners to the Southerners and that both groups were Neo-Confucian literati. My analysis of the five enshrined figures shows that in reality Joseon Neo-Confucianism had attained the political power to actualize Neo-Confucianism. In addition, in theoretical terms these Neo-Confucian literati had developed their own understanding of Neo-Confucianism and they were ready to escape from blind copying of Ming. This was a significant development in the intellectual history of Joseon.

⁹¹ Jeong, Okja, *Joseonhugi Jiseongsa*, 9–12.

2. The First Crisis for Joseon Neo-Confucianism:

The *Imjin* War and the Discourse of *Jaejojeun*

Between 1592 and 1598 the troops of Ming, Japan and Joseon fought a brutal and devastating series of wars on the Korean peninsula. This war had profound ramifications for the geopolitical balance of power in East Asia. It drained the Ming treasury and diverted Ming forces assigned to control the Jurchen in Manchuria. In the end the founder of the Later Jin, Nurhaci (1559–1626) was organizing his banner men and looking ahead to the conquest of Ming proper. In addition, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) was strengthened by the weakening of the daimyo of western Japan who had invested much in supporting Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1536-1598) Joseon campaign. Meanwhile, Joseon also underwent a significant change after the war, although there was no dynastic change as in China and Japan. This event was so significant that Joseon is sometimes considered in terms of two distinct phases: the early and late Joseon with the *Imjin* war functioning as the watershed moment that separated the two periods of history.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the shifting understandings of Ming by Joseon literati around the period of the *Imjin* war. Not only do I investigate the impact the wars had on the Neo-Confucian literati's view of the Ming, I analyze how the war inspired the Neo-Confucian literati to dream of creating an ideal Neo-Confucian society outside Ming and within Joseon. First, I describe the Ming-Joseon relationship prior to the *Imjin* war for the purpose of comparison. Second, I look at private diaries and public reports of Joseon envoys to Ming and analyze the difference between public and private Joseon views of Ming. Third, I examine the Ming relief force and the basis on which the

decision to dispatch this force was taken, and ask if it taken according to Neo-Confucian philosophy or for more pragmatic reasons. The Discourse of *Jaejojieun* (再造之恩, the benefit of reconstruction for the dynasty) was the Joseon government's response to the crisis created by the *Imjin* war, and in the final section I investigate *Jaejojieun*'s functioning to see if it was based on a Neo-Confucian world view emphasizing serving the Ming or if it was related to domestic security issues.

2.1. A Dark Age but a Good Opportunity for Joseon Neo-Confucianism

The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati was successful in completing the discourse of legitimate heirs and the enshrinement, but their development had not always been smooth, especially in the period from the *Gimyo Sahwa* in 1519 to the enthronement of King Seonjo in 1568. These fifty years were in the middle of the discourse of the legitimate heirs but the previous chapter broadly sketched this period. While this phase must have been experienced as a political dark age from Neo-Confucian literati, but it also afforded them an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Neo-Confucianism and its intellectual nuances. In this section, I divide the period into three stages and analyze how the Neo-Confucian literati readied themselves to rebound.

The first stage runs from the *Gimyo Sahwa* in 1519 to the enthronement of King Injong in 1545. In the immediate aftermath of the *Gimyo Sahwa*, Jungjong's courtiers did not want to be linked with Jo Gwangjo on any account. Even some Neo-Confucian elementary books, the *Small Learning* (小學) and *Reflections on Things at Hand*

(近思錄) became taboo for the reason that Jo and Jo's group loved to read them.⁹² Jo became the icon of a villainous courtier, and Jo's political enemies made a frantic attempt to remove his colleagues and followers, and even his reform plan. For the rest of King Jungjong's reign, Jo Gwangjo was clearly anathema. There were in fact several brave trials to restore Jo Gwangjo's group, and King Jungjong did restore some of them. Until the last moment, however, King Jungjong strongly refused to restore Jo himself.⁹³

The second stage is taken up during the brief reign of King Injong. Jo Gwangjo's group had come close to rebounding from a political perspective during this period. King Injong was of course reluctant to reinstate Jo Gwangjo since his father King Jungjong refused to do so even toward the end of his reign. However Jo's group requested his vindication from both monarchs. At first they used the Royal Lectures. Each time they supported Jo, King Injong agreed with Jo's point of view, however it was still a difficult issue for King Injong to restore Jo.⁹⁴ After they failed to get the King's permission through the Royal Lectures, Jo's group presented King Injong with endless memorials requesting Jo's vindication, yet Injong was still reluctant to agree to a vindication.⁹⁵ However, one day King Injong suddenly became fatally ill.⁹⁶ Unexpectedly he permitted the restoration, making it part of his final will.⁹⁷ Despite this, it was too short a period for Jo's group to realize King Injong's permission to reinstate Jo Gwangjo.

The third stage lasts from the enthronement of King Myeongjong in 1545 to the Queen Dowager Yun's death in 1565. When King Myeongjong was enthroned he was only

⁹² *Jungjong Sillok*, 1533. 11. 16. 2.

⁹³ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1544. 5. 29. 3.

⁹⁴ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 4. 7. 2 / 8. 1 / 9. 1 / 11. 1.

⁹⁵ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 4. 11. 1 / 5. 11. 4 / 5. 19. 3 / 5. 21. 2 / 5. 22. 2 / 5. 25. 4.

⁹⁶ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 6. 25. 4.

⁹⁷ *Injong Sillok*, 1545. 6. 29. 7.

twelve years old. Therefore someone, usually a king's mother or grandmother, had to help him "to manage state affairs from behind the veil." Queen Dowager Yun helped King Myeongjong, but her political power was stronger than expected. King Injong's last will to reinstate Jo Gwangjo was instantly ignored by her.⁹⁸ The reign of King Myeongjong lasted for twenty-two years, but the Queen Dowager Yun actually reigned for twenty of those. Yun's reign was one of the darkest ages in the whole Joseon era. On her demise, a historian of the *Sillok* reviewed her twenty year-long regency and said that it was fortunate that the dynasty did not fall.⁹⁹

From the point of view of political history, the third stage was definitely doomed to ruin, but it afford another opportunity to Joseon Neo-Confucianism. Most Neo-Confucian literati were banished from the court but were able to deepen their understanding of Neo-Confucianism. Three prominent Neo-Confucian figures, Yi Eonjeok, Yi Hwang and Jo Sik, demonstrated the possibility of new intellectual developments and their influence on development of the Neo-Confucian literati cannot be exaggerated.

First of all, Yi Eonjeok was famous for the "Debate of the Supreme Ultimate and Ultimate-less" (太極無極論爭) against Jo Hanbo (曹漢輔, ? - ?), which showed the maturity of early sixteenth century Joseon Neo-Confucianism. However, Yi Eonjeok was exiled in the second year of King Myeongjong's reign¹⁰⁰ and it allowed him a chance to study Neo-Confucianism. Yi devoted himself to scrutinizing principle and deepening the understanding of Neo-Confucian basic concepts, and his understanding of

⁹⁸ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1545. 10. 10. 1.

⁹⁹ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1565. 4. 6. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1547. 9. 18. 3.

this later influenced Yi Hwang. On account of this Yi Eonjeok was finally enshrined with Yi Hwang.

It is a well-known that Yi Hwang studied and taught his followers after he was expelled in the midst of the *Eulsa Sahwa*.¹⁰¹ Jeong Jiun's *Diagram of Heaven's Will*, as mentioned in the previous chapter, demonstrates that Yi Hwang's comment on Jeong's diagram and Gi Daeseung's response to this comment were also products of that time. One of the most famous debates in the Joseon intellectual realm, the Four-Seven Debate, emerged from Yi and Gi's debates on Jeong Jiun's diagram.¹⁰² The core of the Four-Seven Debate was a search for a moral standard within the discipline of Neo-Confucianism, which in turn was a Neo-Confucian's natural response and obligation to the mid-sixteenth century's immoral political context.¹⁰³

Yi Hwang's friend and rival Jo Sik did not have an official role during the reign of King Myeongjong. Jo Sik studied various philosophies, the teachings of Wang Yang-ming, Taoism and even Buddhism, none of which related to the civil exam,¹⁰⁴ yet, ironically, Jo always regarded practical application to be the most important issue and used this to criticize aspects of Yi Hwang's theoretical approach.¹⁰⁵ In the end Jo's practical teaching influenced his followers, some of who became major leaders of righteous armies during the *Imjin War*.¹⁰⁶ Dark clouds hung over the reign of King Myeongjong, but Joseon Neo-Confucianism matured and prepared for a new age during this period. Direct or

¹⁰¹ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1545. 10. 10. 2.

¹⁰² Yi Hwang separated principle and material force (理氣 不相雜) in order to find a moral standard from the Four Beginnings (四端). Gi objected to Yi's theory since, in his argument, principle and material force cannot be separated (理氣 不相離).

¹⁰³ Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, xv-xxxv.

¹⁰⁴ Son, Byeonguk, "Suyanggwa Silcheoneui Tongil," 172-185.

¹⁰⁵ Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, 74.

¹⁰⁶ Son, Byeonguk, "Suyanggwa Silcheoneui Tongil," 183.

indirect political victims of King Myeongjong furthered Joseon's Neo-Confucianism intellectual development and made it ample for the coming times.

The Neo-Confucian literati's preparations through these three stages came before a golden opportunity. After the reign of King Myeongjong, there seemed to be a tacit understanding that good government must rest on Neo-Confucian political norms and moral structures, but there was a strong possibility of a return to something similar to Queen Dowager Yun's tyranny again. First, the rule of the fourteenth King Seonjo must have been weak since he was the youngest grandson of a concubine. The previous twelve successions to the throne had seen various disorders and fratricides, however all kings were the sons of queens. There were no sons or even grandsons of queens left except for four grandsons of King Jungjong's concubines. King Seonjo was the youngest of them. Second, Seonjo was just sixteen years old when he was enthroned. Again, someone had to help the king "to manage state affairs from behind the veil." This time it was the Queen Dowager Sim. Third, it was Sim who recommended Yi Hagyun (King Seonjo) as a legitimate heir to the throne two years earlier.¹⁰⁷ There was a strong possibility of Queen Dowager Sim's tyranny on this occasion, but the Queen Dowager surprisingly refused to exercise her power. There was no clear evidence for the reason behind this, but she might have remembered her husband King Myeongjong's anguish because of his mother's tyranny, the Queen Dowager Yun. The Queen Dowager Sim resigned and entrusted King Seonjo with full kingship earlier than expected.¹⁰⁸

The Neo-Confucian literati did not want to miss out on a golden opportunity this time and responded by recommending these prominent teachers. Even if one just hears the

¹⁰⁷ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1565. 9. 17. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Seonjo Sujeong Sillok*, 1568. 2. 1. 5.

names of King Seonjo's teachers, one might be astonished given the accomplishment and reputation. These teachers' influence was very significant, and it is impossible to examine this in detail in this chapter. Just looking at each figure's inaugural Royal Lectures can tell us each figure's thoughts. The first teacher was Yi Hwang, who was appointed as the Minister of Rites just after King Seonjo's enthronement.¹⁰⁹ In fact Yi Hwang did not teach King Seonjo for a long time but left a significant mark nonetheless. At Yi Hwang's first Royal Lecture Yi emphasized the controversial book, the *Small Learning*,¹¹⁰ which had been on the list of banned books because Jo Gwangjo's group loved to read it, as mentioned above.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the book was also proscribed reading in the Royal Lectures.¹¹² Yi also vindicated Kim Goengpil, Jo Gwangjo, Kim Jongjik, Jeong Yeochoang and Yi Eonjeok in his first Royal Lecture.¹¹³ It meant that Yi affirmed that the old era, that of Queen Dowager Yun and her family, was passed and a new era – a Neo-Confucian one – had finally emerged into public prominence.

Yi Hwang's promulgation did not conclude in mere gesture. During his last sojourn in the capital before his death, he produced two famous documents, "Memorial on Six Points Presented in 1568" (戊辰六條疏) and "Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning" (聖學十圖). "Memorial on Six Points Presented in 1568" showed the maturity of Joseon Neo-Confucian political philosophy at that time. The first two points of the "Memorial on Six Points" dealt with King Seonjo's political context. The third point outlined what the Neo-Confucian literati wanted a king to do and this point was

¹⁰⁹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1567. 7. 6. 1.

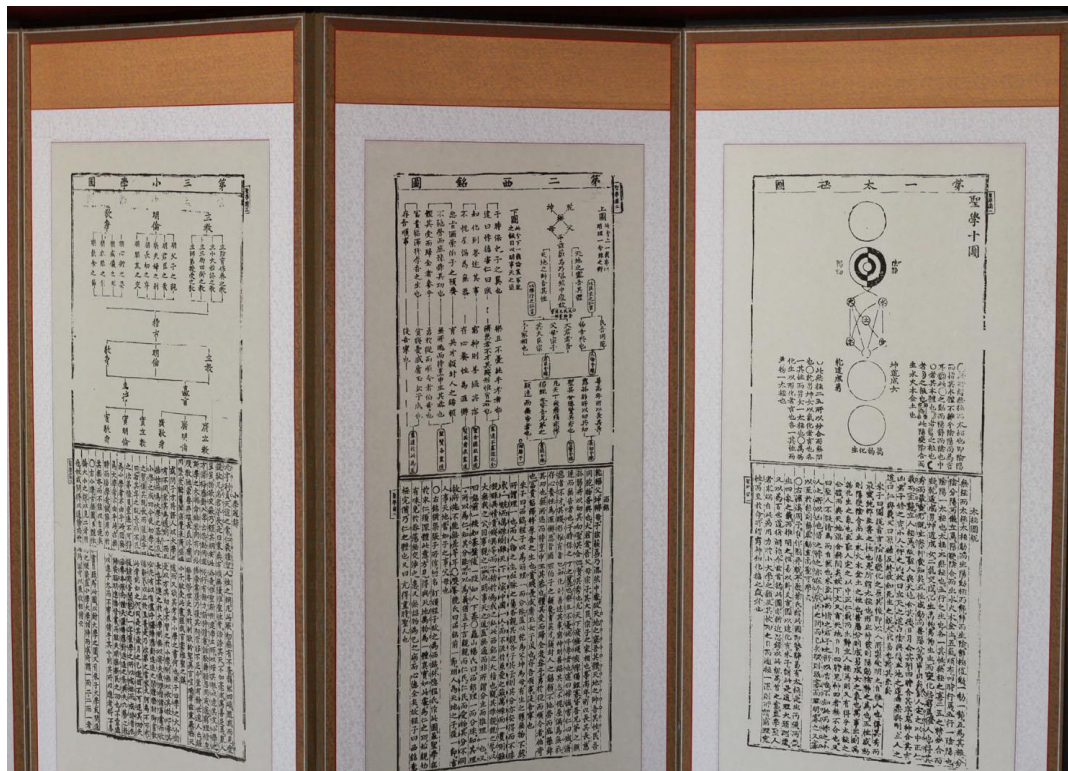
¹¹⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1567. 11. 4. 1.

¹¹¹ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1533. 11. 16. 2.

¹¹² *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1553. 4. 18. 1.

¹¹³ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1567. 11. 4. 1.

particularly concerned with sage learning (聖學) as the basis of good rule. The fourth point warned against heterodox teachings (Buddhism) and sought to develop the Way (道). The fifth was based on the importance of trustworthy high officials and censorial agencies, and the last dealt with the close connection between recognizing the will of heaven and the kingly way.¹¹⁴



<Picture 4: Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning (聖學十圖)>

Yi also dedicated “Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning” to the King. When he saw it, King Seonjo said that it was a very important text and ordered it be made into a folding screen.¹¹⁵ On the Diagram Yi said that there was no essential difference between a ruler and a commoner when it came to questions of learning and self-cultivation. A king

¹¹⁴ Yi, Hwang, *Toegyeseonseo* (退溪全書), vol. 6, no. 2. Last Accessed Sept. 20. 2013. http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&url=/itkcdb/text/bookListIframe.jsp%3FbizName=MK%26seojiId=kc_mk_k002.

¹¹⁵ *Seonjo Sujeong Sillok*, 1568. 12. 1. 1.

needed particular kinds of knowledge to govern, but Confucians traditionally considered the essential learning for all government to be the cultivation of oneself as a full and proper human being (*The Diagrams on Sage Learning*).¹¹⁶ Traditional Confucians had affirmed that any man could become a sage, but had let it remain a theoretical ideal. Now Yi elaborated a metaphysical, psychological and ascetical framework that showed the path to becoming a sage.¹¹⁷

When the *Small Learning*, which Yi had emphasized, was read in the Royal Lectures,¹¹⁸ Gi Daeseung taught King Seonjo as the next teacher. Gi's uncle Gi Jun (1492–1521) was one of the *Gimyo Sahwa*'s victims as a member of Jo Gwangjo's group. This meant that Jo's group was completely restored and their political power became higher than at any other point before. Gi strongly requested that King Seonjo vindicate *Gimyo Sahwa*'s victims in his first Royal Lecture.¹¹⁹ Naturally, Gi's first topic was the differentiation between those who are virtuous and those who are not. This argument was in fact one of the main issues of kingship, but King Seonjo was just a teenager at that time and needed more basic learning. Ironically, King Seonjo was the first king who suffered the evils of factional politics.

Amazingly King Seonjo's third teacher was Yi I. In other words, Yi Hwang, Gi Daeseung and Yi I, the most prominent three figures of the Joseon dynasty, all taught King Seonjo. Yi I also presented his thoughts in his first Royal Lecture. "Although Your Majesty (King Seonjo) ruled for a couple of years, it was ineffective. This is because of

¹¹⁶ Kalton translated and edited "Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning" with his commentaries in his book, *To Become a Sage*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

¹¹⁷ Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, 25.

¹¹⁸ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1568. 3. 25. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1567. 10. 23. 2.

the insufficiency of your cultivation.”¹²⁰ It seemed to be very rude but reflected the reality very clearly. Yi emphasized a king’s own cultivation, unlike Gi Daeseung. Yi came to the conclusion that with Mencius teaching. “If a king makes his mind correct, a dynasty should be stable.”¹²¹ It was a very Neo-Confucian solution. It meant that the root of all political, social and even economic problems was related to a king’s self-cultivation. Yi, however, did not exhaust his efforts in speculative thinking. Yi submitted the “Memorial in Ten Thousand Words” (萬言封事) to King Seonjo on the first day of 1574.¹²² It combined Neo-Confucian instruction on kingly rule, with popular indoctrination and practical advice on economic, military and administrative matters. Most significantly, Yi called for flexibility in policy planning and legislation and thus distanced himself in distinct terms from timeworn legal conservatism.¹²³

With the extension of a deeper understanding of Neo-Confucianism the Joseon literati were able to intellectually rebound during this period, although it was seemingly a dark period in political terms. Before they got hegemony on the court in completing the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement, Neo-Confucian literati could make theoretical preparation during this period.

2.2. Development of the Relationship between Ming and Joseon

Before scrutinizing the discourse of *Jaejojieun* on a larger scale it is necessary to study the development of the relationship between Ming and Joseon prior to the *Imjin* war in

¹²⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1569. 8. 16. 2.

¹²¹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1569. 8. 16. 2.

¹²² *Seonjo Sujeong Sillok*, 1574. 1. 1. 3.

¹²³ Yi I, *Yulgok Jeonseo* (栗谷全書) vol. 5, no. 7, Accessed Sept. 20, 2013, <http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MM>

order to compare it with the discourse of *Jaejojieun*. I roughly divide the development of the relationship between them into three phases. In the third phase, I compare private diaries with the public reports of Joseon envoys to Ming. This comparison helps to understand how the Neo-Confucian literati understood the Ming before the *Imjin* war.

In the first phase, the relationship between Ming and Joseon was more significant than that just of neighbouring countries. From the outset of the Joseon dynasty, more precisely from the final stage of the Goryeo dynasty, the diplomatic policy towards Ming had been one of the most important political issues at court. Ming was established in 1368, and King Gongmin (1330–1374) of the Goryeo dynasty immediately adopted a pro-Ming stance and exchanged envoys. Goryeo's literati also embraced the new teaching, Neo-Confucianism, and supported King Gongmin's pro-Ming stance. In 1374, however, King U (1374–1388) ascended the throne and shifted to an anti-Ming stance. At that time Ming also proclaimed its intention to make a claim on the whole of Goryeo's northeastern territory that had constituted the Yuan's (元, 1271–1368) realm, *Ssangseong Commandery* (雙城愼管府). Two commanders in particular, Choe Yeong (崔瑩, 1316–1388) and Yi Seonggye (李成桂, 1335–1408, the future King Taejo of Joseon), became famous as a result of their repeated successes against the Japanese raiders (倭寇), sharply disagreed with each other over Goryeo's diplomatic policy toward Ming. As commander-in-chief Choe Yeong was determined to strike Ming by invading the Liadong. However, Yi Seonggye, a deputy commander, favoured a pro-Ming policy, marched his army back from *Wihwa* Island in the mouth of the Yalu (威化島 回軍, *Wihwado Hoegun*, 1388). The first crisis against Ming was relieved by Yi Seonggye's retreat, the *Wihwado Hoegun*. Then Yi had to expel Choe Yeong and King U. Yi Seonggye's *Wihwado Hoegun* was one of the most important historic and

foundational moments for the new Joseon dynasty. Of course, the diplomatic policy toward Ming was at the centre of this historic moment.

The exceptionally close relationship between Ming and Joseon was also testified to by the name, Joseon. The new dynasty was founded on the seventeenth of the seventh month in 1392, but it did not yet have a new name. The new Yi court, which had adopted a pro-Ming stance, reported their foundation to Ming, and then requested that the Ming Emperor Hongwu (1328–1398) choose a name between *Hwaryeong* (和寧) and Joseon.¹²⁴ Three months later a Joseon envoy came from Ming, and the new dynasty finally got its new name, which was chosen by the Ming Emperor Hongwu.¹²⁵

Joseon's autonomy, however, was not impinged on. As Yi Samseong's indicated, the formal relationship between Ming and Joseon was a hierarchical one, but the Joseon court enjoyed an informal autonomy.¹²⁶ Ming's first reply on the new dynasty's first report of the dynastic change the Ming court answered in these terms: "the Korean peninsula was fixed in boundary by mountains and sea. The Heaven made *Dongi* (東夷, the Eastern barbarian) and it was not our business from ancient times... Just let us know of your new name as soon as possible."¹²⁷ The formal relationship between Ming and Joseon reflected the hierarchy of the universal Confucian world order, and there was no interference between Ming and Joseon. Thus Joseon's tribute-like relationship to Ming was different from its earlier relationship with Jurchen and Mongol. However, it seems that Joseon's posture of defining its identity in the tributary relations with Ming was – at the time – the most realistic one for the new dynasty to take if it were to maintain a

¹²⁴ *Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 11. 29. 1.

¹²⁵ *Taejo Sillok*, 1393. 2. 15. 1.

¹²⁶ Yi, Samseong, *Dongasiaeui Jeonjaenggwa Pyeonghwa*, 150–160.

¹²⁷ *Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 11. 27. 1.

measure of autonomy within the bounds of dependency on a powerful Ming.¹²⁸

One more important thing was that Ming did not demand the attendance of Joseon's embassy very frequently. On the contrary, Joseon wanted to send an embassy to Ming frequently. The frequent visits of Joseon's ambassador provoked protests from Ming's Ministry of Rites. During the reign of the Emperor Hongwu there was an excessive number of unscheduled Joseon tribute missions. Ming's Ministry of Rites bore the enormous cost of hosting Joseon's envoys, but Joseon persisted in sending them. According to Clark's study, between 1392 and 1450, Joseon dispatched 390 envoys to Ming. On average, it was about seventy times each year. The number dropped to fewer than four times a year in the reign of King Seongjong, but it rose again around the Jungjong Restoration. Eventually it averaged to around four times a year after the Restoration. In contrast the total number of Ming's embassies to Joseon between 1392 and 1644 was 186, an average of less than one a year.¹²⁹

Nevertheless, in general the peaceful relations between Ming and Joseon established a tributary diplomatic policy that was not always stable. Various troubles arose between them from the second year of the Joseon dynasty. Ming adopted threatening attitudes for five reasons: Joseon's spies; conciliatory measures such as the Joseon court's conciliatory policy toward Jurchen; corruption; horses as a tribute; and the late reporting of the new dynastic title, Joseon.¹³⁰ The Joseon court answered the Ming Emperor's letter (勅書) and stated that all suspicions were a misunderstanding and added that Joseon served Ming with its heart and soul.¹³¹ However, Joseon's envoy was beaten to a pulp because his courtesy was not correct according to protocol expected in

¹²⁸ Chung, Chaisik, "Chong Tojon," 64-65.

¹²⁹ Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary," 280-283.

¹³⁰ *Taejo Sillok*, 1393. 5. 23. 1.

¹³¹ *Taejo Sillok*, 1393. 6. 1. 1.

the presence of the Ming Emperor. The Ming Emperor sent a Royal Letter to refuse the Joseon envoy's entry to Ming ever again.¹³²

In the end the Joseon court was sharply divided into two opinions, one advocating war and the other to halt a military campaign. Jeong Dojeon was one of main figures arguing for war, and Jo Jun (趙浚, 1346–1405) was on the opposing side. Jeong Dojeon earnestly requested King Taejo to attack Liadong,¹³³ and to drill troops.¹³⁴ Jeong Dojeon, however, did not have an objection to serving Ming itself. Jeong said that *Sadae* (事大, serving a strong country) was a just order. It meant that serving a strong country was an unavoidable diplomatic choice in order to keep peace, however, if a strong country, in this case Ming, imposed unreasonable demands, the moral duty as a tributary country could be broken. Jeong recognized *Sadae* as a mutual obligation, thereby if one side overstepped the line, the other did not need to obey the rules. In the end, Jeong was known as the root of evil in Ming's court, and Ming strongly requested Jeong's extradition.¹³⁵ On the other side, Jo Jun had tried to persuade Jeong and King Taejo to stop the Liadong Conquest Plan. Jo argued that it was difficult to raise an army among people who were alienated from the Joseon government.¹³⁶ Simply speaking, the plan to attack Liadong was impossible. The Joseon court could not find a solution at this stage, but fortunately this did not result in a military conflict. Both Ming and Joseon had to focus on their own domestic administration as newly emerging countries.¹³⁷

The changes in each domestic context improved the relationship between Ming and

¹³² *Taejo Sillok*, 1393. 8. 15. 1.

¹³³ *Taejo Sillok*, 1397. 6. 14. 1.

¹³⁴ *Taejo Sillok*, 1398. 8. 9. 1.

¹³⁵ An, Jeongheui, "Joseon Chogieui Sadaeron," 10–13.

¹³⁶ *Taejo Sillok*, 1397. 6. 14. 1

¹³⁷ An, Jeongheui, "Joseon Chogieui Sadaeron," 13.

Joseon. On the Joseon side Jeong Dojeon was purged in 1398, not at Ming's request but as a result of domestic political struggles. On the other hand, the founder of Ming, Emperor Hongwu, died in 1398, and his grandson Zhu Yunwen assumed the throne as the Jianwen Emperor (1398–1402). In a prelude to a three-year-long civil war beginning in 1399, the Jianwen Emperor became engaged in a political showdown with his uncle Zhu Di (1360–1424), the Prince of Yan. There was no military conflict between Ming and Joseon during this time.

In the end Zhu Di was enthroned as the Yongle Emperor (1402–1424) and the situation changed. The neighbouring countries became tense at the Yongle Emperor's new territorial expansion policy.¹³⁸ King Taejong also gave orders to serve Ming with devotion (至誠事大), but at the same time strengthen national defences.¹³⁹ Seven years later, King Taejong again ordered these two plans be observed, serving Ming with devotion and strengthening the national defences when he was told by reports that Ming planned to conquer the Mongols,¹⁴⁰ although there was no military conflict between Ming and Joseon at this time. However, this was mainly due to the imbalance in military power and not based on Neo-Confucian principles. During the first phase serving Ming was based on practical necessities, but at the same time the preparation and completion of national defences was pursued.¹⁴¹

In brief, the relationship between Ming and Joseon had been maintained thanks to each side's practical needs. Neo-Confucian worldview offered just theoretical framework in the first phase.

¹³⁸ Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary," 276–279.

¹³⁹ *Taejong Sillok*, 1407. 4. 8. 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Taejong Sillok*, 1414. 6. 20. 4.

¹⁴¹ An, Jeongheui, "Joseon Chogieui Sadaeron," 18.

The reason behind serving Ming, however, gradually changed during the second phase, and it was King Sejong who changed this from a practical reason to one based on Neo-Confucian principle. Sejong answered that serving Ming was a kind of obligation as a subject when Joseon courtiers criticized his excessive serving of the Ming.¹⁴² Ming also eulogised King Sejong's sincerity and treated Joseon's envoy on the same footing with Ming courtiers.¹⁴³ Sejong's serving of Ming reflected an underlying political calculation. According to An Jeongheui's research, King Sejong wanted to complete the structure of the Joseon dynasty using Neo-Confucian principles, and he Sejong believed that the relationship between a king and courtiers based on Neo-Confucian values was one of the most important tasks to follow at that time. It meant that the new dynasty, Joseon, was not ready to realize Neo-Confucian principles in the court. King Sejong emphasized one's duty as a subject to his courtiers, and personally showed an example of this by serving Ming with sincerity.¹⁴⁴ In the end Joseon courtiers agreed with King Sejong's discipline, and began to recognize the relationship between Ming and Joseon as that of one between parents and children as during the reign of King Seongjong.¹⁴⁵ Now serving Ming was not based on practical reasons anymore, but on Neo-Confucian obligation in the manner of a subject or a son, however the second phase did not last for long.

The Neo-Confucian principled relationship between Ming and Joseon changed again during the third phase. There are good references to show a new relationship emerging between Ming and Joseon in the sixteenth century. In 1574 one of Yi Hwang's

¹⁴² *Sejong Sillok*, 1428. intercalation 4. 18. 6.

¹⁴³ *Sejong Sillok*, 1449. 9. 12. 1.

¹⁴⁴ An, Jeongheui, "Joseon Chogieui Sadaeron," 27–31.

¹⁴⁵ *Seongjong Sillok*, 1487. 10.1.2.

followers, Heo Bong (許筭, 1551–1588) and one of Yi I's followers, Jo Heon (趙憲, 1544–1592) had been sent together to Ming as Joseon envoys, and the two can be seen as representatives of the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati of that time. Jo Heon left an official report and private diary after his official journey. The former was published under the title, *Donghwanbongsa* (東還封事, A Report after Returning Home) in 1622. In addition Jo left his private diary, *Jocheonilgi* (朝天日記, A diary of a Journey to Ming). There are large differences, however, between Jo's official report and his private diary. Heo Bong also left his private diary *Hagokseonsaeng Jochongi* (荷谷先生朝天記, Sir Hagok's Account of a Journey to Ming) after his official trip. There was no contradiction between Jo's private diary and Heo's private diary, which could afford their private diaries more authenticity. The comparison between Jo's official report and Jo's and Heo's private diaries may be a good method to ascertain the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's understanding of Ming in the late sixteenth century.

Fuma compared Jo's official report and Jo's and Heo's private diaries and summarized it under three main themes: a bribe; the *Guozhi jian* (國子監, the National Academy); and *Xiangue* (鄉約, Community Compact Systems). According to Fuma's comparative research: 1) Jo wrote in his private diary that wherever he went, there were officials demanding money. Jo once asked an official in Beijing, "how can you demand money when you are a public official?" The official answered "is there anyone among the officials nowadays who does not demand money?" However, Jo wrote in his official report that if an official received a bribe, he should be demoted; 2) Jo and Heo visited the *Gukjagam* and were shocked at the sight. Jo and Heo found just a few students, crumbling walls and bookshelves covered with dust. They met a few students and asked

them some questions, and they were again shocked by their discourteous and flippant responses. The moment Jo and Heo gave them a writing brush and an ink stick as gifts they quarrelled over it among themselves. However, Jo wrote in his official report that there were lectures every day except holidays and the sound of classics being read resounded in the streets; 3) Jo wrote in his official report that *Hyangyak* was carried out well, and good courtesy and customs were observable, yet the actual scene he had encountered was that of a foolish man leading and teaching people, according to Jo's private diary. This led him to be doubtful about the effects of *Hyangyak*.¹⁴⁶

The more surprising thing is the substantial differences between Jo's official report and Jo's and Heo's private diaries: Jo's dual records were not a fraudulent act. It meant that Joseon Neo-Confucian literati already knew of the actual conditions of the Ming. The Joseon court dispatched envoys to Ming four times a year in general, normally numbering about thirty members. Jo and Heo might also have heard of Ming's actual situation from their friends who had been sent to Ming as envoys. They, of course, told of their journey to their family and friends. In other words, the actual condition of Ming was not a secret. Nevertheless, Jo's official report was at variance with the facts, and amazingly no one made his deceitful report an issue. There seemed to be a tacit agreement among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati. The Ming in an official report was not the actual Ming Jo had encountered. Humma has described the Ming in Joseon's official report as a kind of Utopia.¹⁴⁷

The word, Utopia, comes from the Greek. 'U' means 'not' and 'topia', 'place.' Sir Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, utilized the concept as an allegory and did not

¹⁴⁶ Fuma, *Yeonghaengsa*, 21-70.

¹⁴⁷ Fuma, *Yeonghaengsa*, 51-52.

consider such an ideal place to be realistically possible. The ideal Neo-Confucian world did not exist either, but the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati still needed a certain object to be consulted and followed as a model. In the end, the sixteenth century Joseon Neo-Confucian literati imagined an ideal Neo-Confucian society and just called it ‘Ming.’ The actual Ming was no longer a model to Joseon, but the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati still needed Ming as a model. Under these circumstances the Joseon envoys seemed to report Ming as a spotless ideal society but criticized the actual Ming without mercy in private.

The most important change, however, is found in the last part of Jo’s official report. He reported that “What Zhu Xi could not make would certainly come true in Joseon someday.”¹⁴⁸ This seems to be exactly what the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati of the sixteenth century dreamed of – a legitimate successor to Chinese civilization (朝鮮小中華論). They already held a dominant position relating to Ming from the point of view of Neo-Confucian values. Jo and Heo used Neo-Confucian criteria, such as a sense of shame, evil instruction, barbarian, duties, and so on when they criticized Ming. King Seonjo also warned of the unconditional imitation of Ming. On the same day a historian of the *Sillok* added like this: “we [Joseon] generally sent a researcher to learn from Ming.... But now there is nothing to learn... we have never sent a researcher again.”¹⁴⁹

In conclusion, the relationship between Ming and Joseon fluctuated in line with practical political necessities. Only during the second phase, between the reign of Kings Sejong and Seongjong, was the relationship understood using Neo-Confucian

¹⁴⁸ *Seonjo Sujeong Sillok*, 1574. 11.1.2.

¹⁴⁹ *Seonjo Sujeong Sillok*, 1574. 11.1.2.

principles. During the third phase, the relationship between Ming and Joseon was reversed from the point of Neo-Confucianism. From a Neo-Confucian viewpoint Joseon's confidence that they were superior to Ming emerged at least two decades before the *Imjin* war. Joseon Neo-Confucians declared that they did not need to learn from Ming anymore. Joseon began to dream of being the Neo-Confucian ideal society, moving beyond the actual Ming. The term 'Ming' was just a symbolic name evoking the Neo-Confucian ideal society, at least as used by the Joseon Neo-Confucians. It did not specifically mean the actual Ming as exemplifying the ideal society or as the object that embodied Neo-Confucian values.

2.3. Benefit of the Reconstruction of the Dynasty (*Jaejojieun*)

In this section, typical misunderstandings of *Jaejojieun* are re-examined here in order to study the original meaning and other usages of *Jaejojieun*. In addition the international and Joseon's domestic political situations around the *Imjin* war are also studied.

The term, '*Jaejojieun*' (再造之恩) in fact had been a common expression from early times in China. *Jae* (再) means 're-,' *Jo* (造) 'to create' or 'to build,' *Ji* (之) '-s' and *Eun* (恩) 'grace' or 'favour' (Mathew's Chinese-English Dictionary). '*Jaejojieun*' could be translated as "a benefit of rescuing a person or reconstructing a country having been through a crisis." In the Joseon dynasty '*Jaejojieun*' was a common expression. *Jaejojieun* became a special term during the *Imjin* war, but in the *Sillok* '*Jaejojieun*' in relation to the Ming around the period of the *Imjin* war was only found six times.

There are sixty other examples of *Jaejojieun* before the *Imjin* war in the *Sillok*. All of these other usages are related to a king's gratitude or a villainous courtier's ungratefulness. There is only one other usage of *Jaejojieun* after the *Imjin* war. When courtiers discussed King Seonjo's achievements after the *Imjin* war, they credited the benefit of reconstruction of the dynasty (*Jaejojieun*) to King Seonjo.¹⁵⁰ If one extends 'Jaejojieun' to 'Jaejo' (再造), one could find several other usages. The Jungjong Restoration was indicated as 'Jaejo'.¹⁵¹ There is another example related to the Ming. It goes back to the *Ming Tai Zu Shi Lu* (明太祖實錄, The Veritable Record of the Ming Tai Zu). King Taejo Yi Seonggye was listed incorrectly in the *Ming Tai Zu Shi Lu* as a son of Yi Inim, a Goryeo courtier. The Joseon court had tenaciously requested that it should be amended, but the Ming court had followed the *Ming Tai Zu Shi Lu* for the next two centuries. In 1587 *Da Ming Hui Dian* (大明會典, Collected Statutes of the Ming Dynasty) was revised, and the name of Yi Seonggye's father was finally amended. King Seonjo heard of this and expressed it as 'Jaejo'.¹⁵² Therefore *Jaejojieun* did not directly refer to Ming's favour of reconstructing of the Joseon dynasty during the *Imjin* war.

Second, there are common misunderstandings of *Jaejojieun*, which are related to *Sadaejueui* or colonialism. *Sadae* (serving a strong country) is different from colonialism or the law of survival of the strongest. The famous phrase, a small country's serving a stronger one, is originally from the *Zuo Zhuan* (左傳, Commentary of Zuo). The ways needed to regulate maintain one's interaction with neighbouring kingdoms is also found in the *Mencius* (孟子). The dialogue between Mencius and King Qi Xuan

¹⁵⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1604. 9. 4. 2.

¹⁵¹ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1517. 10. 30. 1.

¹⁵² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1587. 8. 10. 1.

(齊宣王, King Seon of the Je Kingdom, 319–301 BCE) in the *Meng Zi* is important for understanding *Jaejojieun*, so a part of it is cited below:

The king Qi Xuan asked, saying, ‘Is there any way to regulate one’s maintenance of interaction with neighbouring kingdoms?’

Mencius replied, ‘Yes, there is. But it requires a perfectly virtuous prince to be able, with a great country, to serve a small one – as, for instance, Tang served Ge, and king Wen served the Kun barbarians. And it requires a wise prince to be able, with a small country, to serve a large one – as the king Tai served the Xun Yu, and Gou Jian served Wu. He who with a great State serves a small one, delights in Heaven. He, who with a small State serves a large one, stands in awe of Heaven. He, who delights in Heaven, will affect with his love and protection the whole kingdom. He, who stands in awe of Heaven, will affect with his love and protection his own kingdom. It is said in the Book of Poetry, “I fear the Majesty of Heaven, and will thus preserve its favouring decree.”’¹⁵³

From this dialogue a great country’s serving a small one and a small country’s serving a great one are estimated to be on the same level. One is to delight Heaven and the other is to stand in awe of Heaven. In other words the community of men, especially men who delight in Heaven or stand in awe of Heaven, is not a worldly animal order governed by the law of survival under the strongest. A strong country could serve a small country rather than plundering it if there is a perfectly virtuous prince in the country. A small country also could live together with a stronger country through serving it. It is of course a tough task to realize, but it is, apparently, one of the best ways to avoid an endless war of attrition and to pursue a peaceful coexistence. This

¹⁵³ Mencius, *Maengja* – Liang Hui Wang II, 3-1, 2.

world order was based on a typical Confucian worldview during the age of the Hundred Schools of Thought period (諸子百家時代).

It was Fairbank who first conducted large scale modern historical research of the Chinese world. His interests focussed on China's relation with non-Chinese states before the twentieth century, mainly during the Qing dynasty. He admitted that 'international' and even 'interstate' do not seem appropriate terms for the character of China's foreign relations, so he called it "the Chinese world order".¹⁵⁴ He also recognized that the participants in the Chinese world order did not use concepts corresponding to Western ideas of nation, sovereignty or equality of states enjoying their own sovereignty. He also characterized the Chinese world order as hierarchical and non-egalitarian.¹⁵⁵

After Fairbank's research, Jeon Haejong conducted a case study of the tributary system between Qing and Joseon. Jeon argued that Joseon was the model tributary, and during the Qing dynasty official Sino-Joseon dealings provided an example of the relations expected or desired between Qing and other peripheral states.¹⁵⁶ He concluded that there was no sound economic and cultural reason for Chinese rulers to establish and maintain such a magnificent tributary system. The nature of the tributary system, thus, can be best explained from the point of view of politics. Qing only wanted Joseon to remain gentle and ritualistic, not to stay disobedient, and Joseon was the former. So as long as Joseon sent tributes, received imperial patents concerning matters of adoption and marriage and remained peaceful, Qing did not interfere with Joseon's internal affairs.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," 2.

¹⁵⁵ Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," 2-5.

¹⁵⁶ Chun, Hae-jong, "Relations in the Ch'ing Period," 90.

¹⁵⁷ Chun, Hae-jong, "Relations in the Ch'ing Period," 110-111.

Fairbank and Jeon's research, however, focused mainly on the Qing period. Clark researched the development of Sino-Korean tributary relations during the Ming dynasty, and divides them into several phases.¹⁵⁸ It means that the relationship between Ming and Joseon was not a continuous monotone. As mentioned above the relationship between Ming and Joseon could be divided into more than three phases. Clark also argues that the relationship between Qing and Joseon was much different from that of between Ming and Joseon.¹⁵⁹

Yi Samseong also traces the history of relations between China and Korea from the ancient times and argues that the Sino-central relationship was invented as a kind of international security regime in East Asia. In addition, he pays attention to the diversity and heterogeneity of the Chinese world order for the last two thousand years although Fairbank mainly deals with the Qing era. Yi worries that we have understood the Chinese world order too simply.¹⁶⁰ Each relationship, that between Song and Goryeo, Yuan and Goryeo, Ming and Joseon, and Qing and Joseon had distinctive features at each phase. Even the relationship between Ming and Joseon altered according to the changing context.

Therefore, the dynamic relationship between China and Korea should be researched according to the situations that prevailed at different moments. Han Myeonggi studies the relationship between Ming and Joseon, especially around the *Imjin* war, and points out that Ming's dispatching of a relief force for Joseon was carefully calculated from the point of view of the potential profit and loss from a Ming perspective. In addition, after careful calculations by each side, *Jaejojieun* was added and explained as a political term

¹⁵⁸ Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary," 272–275.

¹⁵⁹ Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary," 275–276.

¹⁶⁰ Yi, Samseong, *Dongasiaeui Jeongjaenggwa Pyeonghwa*, 158–159.

based on Neo-Confucianism.¹⁶¹

In brief, *Jaejojieun* was a common expression, and its various usages were simply found in Joseon historical documents. Most other examples of *Jaejojieun* before the *Imjin* war were used internally, especially in relations between a king and courtiers. Through the *Imjin* war it was developed as a diplomatic term. What was more was that the relationship between China and Korea was too diverse to summarise in one word. Even if one limits the scope to around the period of the *Imjin* war, one would find that the relationship between Ming and Joseon changed according to the situation that prevailed at different moments.

2.4. The *Imjin* War (*Imjin Waeran*) and *Jaejojieun*

The Japanese invasion of Korea included two separate operations. The first occurred in 1592 and the second in 1597. Korean terms the first invasion *Imjin Waeran* (壬辰倭亂) and the second *Jeongyu Jaeran* (丁酉再亂). In the sexagenary cycle (六十甲子), *Imjin* is the year of 1592 and *Jeongyu* in 1597. *Wae* (倭) means ‘Japanese,’ *ran* (亂), ‘disturbance’ and *Jae* (再), ‘again.’ Therefore the first invasion means “the Japanese disturbance of 1592” and the second, “the second disturbance of 1597.” The term *Imjin Waeran* can cover these two invasions in Korean.

However, *Imjin Waeran* is not a common term in international academic circles. In Japan, the first operation is called “Bunroku no Eki” (文禄の役 / ぶんろくのえき), and the second, “Keicho no Eki” (慶長の役 / けいちょうのえき). ‘Bunroku’ means

¹⁶¹ Han, Myeonggi, “Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye,” 31–42.

the Japanese era between 1592 and 1596 and ‘Keicho’, between 1596 and 1615. However, the Japanese generally call it “Hideyoshi no Joseon Shinryaku” (豊臣秀吉の朝鮮侵略, Hideyoshi’s Invasion of Joseon), the ‘Seikan’ (せいかん, 征韓, Glorious Conquest of Joseon) or the ‘Seibatsu’ (せいばつ, 征伐, Glorious Pacification of Joseon). Another combatant nation, Ming, called it the “Wanli Korean Campaign” (萬曆朝鮮戰爭) or “Renchen War to Defend the Nation.”¹⁶²

As might be expected, all three countries utilized contrasting memories of the war for their own purposes. In Japan this war was referred as “unfinished business.” In 1930, after Korea’s annexation, they rebuilt Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s castle at Osaka. In China, Emperor Wanli became one of major scapegoats for the fall of the Ming, even though he had been honoured in Korea.¹⁶³ The Joseon court wanted to use *Jaejojeun* as political propaganda, which is the main issue in this chapter. After Japanese imperialism, General Yi Sunsin (李舜臣, 1545-1598) became a national hero.

The *Imjin* War was apparently the single largest military conflict in the world during the sixteenth century. Therefore Swope prefers to call this war “the first Great East Asian War”.¹⁶⁴ In Japan, Hideyoshi mobilized as many as 158,700 soldiers, divided into nine brigades, for the main attack. They were transported by 9,200 sailors and were served by other 100,000 troops as a reserve force.¹⁶⁵ Against these Japanese grand scale troops, Joseon maintained only a few military units with no field army. Under Joseon’s military system at that time, the dynasty’s defence depended mainly on the mobilization of

¹⁶² Swope, *A Dragon’s Head and a Serpent’s Tail*, 5.

¹⁶³ Swope, *A Dragon’s Head and a Serpent’s Tail*, 6-7.

¹⁶⁴ Swope, *A Dragon’s Head and a Serpent’s Tail*, 5-6.

¹⁶⁵ Berry, *Hideyoshi*, 209.

citizen soldiers in the case of emergency.¹⁶⁶ For example, local officers could not respond individually to a foreign invasion of their jurisdiction until a higher-ranking general appointed by the central court did so.¹⁶⁷ During the *Imjin* war, Joseon deployed approximately 84,500 regular troops, assisted by 22,000 volunteers (義兵, Righteous Army).¹⁶⁸ In brief, Joseon's defence against the well-prepared Japanese force was beyond Joseon's capacity during the first phase of the war. After Ming entered the war on Joseon's side, both sides were essentially balanced. Ming sent 166,700 troops and 17 million silver *liang* (兩) which was about six months' revenue for the entire Ming Empire.¹⁶⁹ Ming's entry into the conflict changed not only the progress of the war but also Joseon's domestic political situation. Ming's entry and the Joseon court's political context are two of the main issues of this section.

Joseon's situation of the first phase of the *Imjin* war was in an extremely precarious position. On the April 12, 1592 the Japanese First Army composed of fifteen thousand troops landed on the Korean peninsula. The first decisive battle was at Chungju on 28th of the same month, and Joseon's army of eight thousand was defeated by a Japanese force of nineteen thousand.¹⁷⁰ King Seonjo received a reported of the defeat and decided to flee the Royal palace on April 30 of the same month, just three weeks after the outbreak of war. Japanese troops took Hanyang two days later. Just before King Seonjo fled from the palace Gwanghaegun was installed as the Crown Prince.¹⁷¹ Seonjo and Gwanghaegun separated their parties into two groups, representing how serious the royal family's situation was during the first phase of the war, and they arrived at Pyeongyang in a

¹⁶⁶ The difficulty of maintenance of defence forces in reality will be studied in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Turnbull, *Samurai Invasion*, 17-18.

¹⁶⁸ Turnbull, *Samurai Invasion*, 109.

¹⁶⁹ Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, 8.

¹⁷⁰ Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, 87-97.

¹⁷¹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 4. 29. 1.

week. The distance from Hanyang to Pyeongyang is about two hundred and forty kilometres. If one was to walk this distance in a week, one would need to walk four kilo-metres an hour for ten hours a day. The royal flight went at full speed, but they had to take refuge again a month after their first hiding. On eleventh day of the sixth month the royal flight began again from Pyeongyang, and they arrived at Euiju in eleven days.¹⁷²

Joseon's situation was very serious, but the court seemed not to have requested Ming's relief force at the start. According to Swope's research, Joseon's request for Ming's relief force was planned from the beginning, which was not the Joseon court's public stance but a courtier's private opinion. Yi Hangbok (李恒福, 1556–1618), the first royal secretary at that time, said: "The only thing we can do at this point is to send a letter to the Ming, begging them to send a relief force. That is what we must do."¹⁷³ However, Yi's assertion was just one of the courtiers' various plans. The Joseon court appeared to try to make a peace treaty with Japan at first while also discussing self-defence measures against a Japanese attack. After this, the request for a Ming relief force seemed to be the next best plan. When Ming's envoy came to inspect the Joseon military situation, the court did not request Ming's relief force.¹⁷⁴

According to Han's research, the process of dispatching the Ming relief force was not easy either. The Ming court at first could not believe that Hanyang fell in just three weeks. Ming had regarded Joseon as an offspring of Goryeo, a strong nation. Ming was in fact afraid that Joseon and Japan were united in attacking Ming. The Ming court

¹⁷² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592.. 6. 14. 1.

¹⁷³ Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, 105-107.

¹⁷⁴ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 6. 5. 2.

finally sent a painter to sketch King Seonjo in Pyeongyang and spied on Japanese troop movements.¹⁷⁵ After Ming's thorough investigation and reinforcement of their defences, the Ming relief force was finally called up, but it just amounted to around three thousand five hundred men. It came to the border, but hesitated to cross the river *Yalu*. The Ming force's local officer Hak Geol finally urged them to cross the river and then they did.¹⁷⁶

Ming's relief force fought against the Japanese army at Pyeongyang, but they suffered a crushing defeat and withdrew from Joseon. The Ming court was shocked by the Japanese military's strength and was concerned about their national security. Now they needed a sizable relief force. If Japan defeated Joseon, no one could guarantee Ming's security. The worst scenario for Ming was a Japanese naval force crossing the Yellow Sea to attack the Ming mainland. The Yellow Sea route was shorter than the Manchurian route. Joseon's hilly mountainous terrain was ideal for defence. The best way for Ming was to block the Japanese troops before they crossed the river *Yalu*. In the end the Ming court decided to dispatch a large-scale relief force, which took another five months. It meant that there were not only various debates on the dispatch force among Ming courtiers but also there were practical difficulties for raising an army in winter, but it was essential for Ming's own national security.¹⁷⁷

The practical benefit (national security) behind the dispatch of Ming relief forces was a kind of a taboo topic between Ming and Joseon. Ming's military officer Liu Huangchang (劉黃裳, 1529–1595) once asked King Seonjo why Japan invaded Joseon.

¹⁷⁵ *Seonjo Sillok*: 1592. 7. 1. 4 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10.

¹⁷⁶ Han, Myeonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 34–35.

¹⁷⁷ Han, Myeonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 37–39.

King Seonjo answered that “Japan wanted to attack Ming, and we (Joseon) tried to block the way of the Japanese.”¹⁷⁸ Japan had openly said that their final goal was to attack *Yodong* (Liadong) and that they just wanted to have a way to invade China (征明假道). Three days later Yu referred to King Seonjo’s answer for the reason behind Japan’s invasion of Joseon. “It was the Ming Emperor who bestowed a favour on Joseon. Please forbid your courtiers from speaking like that again.”¹⁷⁹ Four years later Ming general Yu also pointed this out: “The Joseon people say that Joseon is a defence for Ming so Ming cannot help rescuing Joseon. But it is not true. If Japanese troops cross the river Yalu, Ming can interrupt their advance.”¹⁸⁰ Ming emphasized the favour to gain ample rewards from Joseon, but Joseon stressed their own strategic importance to acquire more active support from Ming. This is an essential issue in any understanding of the discourse of *Jaejojieun*.

Under these circumstances, amazingly, it was the Joseon court which first referred to *Jaejojieun*. The Joseon Ministry of Rites remembered that the reconstruction of Joseon was due to the victory in Pyeongyang¹⁸¹ by Ming’s relief force.¹⁸² The victory in Pyeongyang was apparently a turning point of the *Imjin* war, but the Joseon court’s emphases and applause for the Ming relief force seems to be excessive. In addition Joseon’s situation at that time was already much better than before the victory. Joseon had lost every battle but the war situation was reversed after the Pyeongyang victory. The Japanese offensive dulled around the autumn, and General Yi Sunsin’s navy and righteous armies gained occasional victories. However, the use of *Jaejojieun* came from

¹⁷⁸ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 1. 3. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 1. 6. 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1597. 5. 11. 4.

¹⁸¹ This victory in Pyeongyang was not the first battle in 1592. It was the second battle conducted by the second relief force in 1593.

¹⁸² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 1. 10. 1 / 3.

the Joseon court, not the Ming. In fact Ming just followed and copied it five years later when Japan invaded the second time in 1598.

One of the most important issues surrounding *Jaejojieun* is that Joseon court emphasized it, but not in order to satisfy Ming. As mentioned above, Joseon emphasized the importance of its strategic position to Ming but Ming emphasized their favour to Joseon. There was no Neo-Confucian discourse related to Ming's relief force at that time. *Jaejojieun*, thus, seems to have been chosen by the court for a political purpose.

2.5. Meanings of *Jaejojieun* and Joseon Neo-Confucianism

In this final section I analyze the reasons why the Joseon court developed the discourse of *Jaejojieun* and also discuss the relationship between this discourse and Joseon Neo-Confucianism. Whether the discourse of *Jaejojieun* was chosen due to a Neo-Confucian framework or not and what changes occurred among Joseon intellectuals around the *Imjin* war are also examined.

First, the discourse of *Jaejojieun* was not a Neo-Confucian intellectual solution at this time. Neo-Confucian courtiers led the discourse of *Jaejojieun*, but it did not directly mean that they led it a Neo-Confucian intellectual banner. The Four-Seven Debate in the early sixteenth century was a good environment for developing Joseon Neo-Confucianism. Moreover, the Neo-Confucian literati's taking hold of power might have been a good opportunity to practice the understanding of Neo-Confucianism in administration. More surprisingly, during the war Royal Lectures were run without a

substantial pause. The *Imjin* war, however, swept away a good environment and the chance for actualizing Joseon's Neo-Confucianism. It did not mean that the court sought a solution for the distressing situation from Neo-Confucianism since the textbook used at that time was the *Changes* (周易).¹⁸³ The urgent situation during the war made King Seonjo study endless changes and solutions for unpredictable situations rather than Neo-Confucian morality or philosophy. Of course, there was not enough time to discuss *Jaejojeun* using a Neo-Confucian approach. What is more, Joseon defeated Japan with Ming's relief force. It meant that there was no reason to explain the situation using Neo-Confucianism.

The discourse of *Jaejojeun* should be understood in terms of the political arena not the intellectual field. The discourse was a kind of propaganda, used especially for domestic affairs and not for diplomacy. The most urgent postbellum problem was how to deal with the righteous army. Han Myeonggi argues that the Joseon court's capricious dealing with the righteous army was a kind of political struggle between central government court officials and local literati, leaders of the righteous armies.¹⁸⁴ The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati could not play their role as intellectuals at that time. There was no specific intellectual need since the main subject, Ming, did not require any further Neo-Confucian explanation. On the contrary, some Neo-Confucian literati as local elites led the righteous army.

The activity of the righteous army was rapid and substantial during the first phase of the war, and the Joseon court's follow-up measures were promptly taken. A famous righteous army leader Gwak Jau's (郭再祐, 1552–1617) first day mobilizing was just

¹⁸³ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1594. 11. 12. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Han, Myeonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 79.

two weeks after the outbreak of war.¹⁸⁵



<Picture 5: Gwak Jau's Monument Park (Mang-U Park), Daegu>

¹⁸⁵ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 6. 28. 4.

The righteous army's volunteer character and their victories were very welcome news to the Joseon court, and King Seonjo appointed their leaders as local officers. In addition, all righteous army members were exempted from various services and taxes (給復, *Geupbok*), and military provisions were also distributed to them.¹⁸⁶ In the end, some local officers on the run passed into other provinces secretly and passed themselves off as righteous army leaders.¹⁸⁷

However, the Joseon court's esteem and respect for the righteous army easily changed depending on the circumstances. Around the tenth month in 1592 the Japanese offensive diminished somewhat, and the possibility of Ming's participation became higher. The value of the righteous army thus declined in the estimation of the court. More conclusively, the merit of a righteous army dwindled rapidly after the victory in Pyongyang by Ming's relief force in 1593.¹⁸⁸ The righteous army was degraded to the status of a transportation unit for Ming's relief force. The case of a righteous army leader, An Baekji (安百之, ?-?) is a case in point. He was put on a trial at a military court for failure to undertake transportation duties.¹⁸⁹ In the end, the Joseon court decided to withdraw the local tax exemption policy for righteous armies.¹⁹⁰ It was a fatal decision for them, and the armies were individually broken up for financial reasons. By the seventh month in 1593 most of the righteous army was broken up.¹⁹¹ However, after Ming's first withdrawal, in the autumn of 1593, there was a serious military vacuum. The Joseon court again paid attention to the righteous army.¹⁹² It was natural that the initial voluntary passion had melted away. Few righteous armies were

¹⁸⁶ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 7. 23. 4.

¹⁸⁷ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 10. 16. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Kim, Seong-u, *Joseonjunggi Gukgwa Sajok*, 348.

¹⁸⁹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 2. 8. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 3. 1. 4.

¹⁹¹ Kim, Seong-u, *Joseonjunggi Gukgwa Sajok*, 348–351.

¹⁹² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. intercalation 11. 4. 8.

mobilised again, but most of them just watched the development of the situation. At the end of the *Jeongyu* war there was no righteous army in the field nationally. This time there were only local and small sized bands, apart from Jeong Inhong's (鄭仁弘, 1535–1623) unit.¹⁹³

The power game between the central courtiers and the righteous army developed vehemently. Kim Seongil (金誠一, 1538–1593) sent a warning message to Gwak Jaeu, a famous righteous army leader. Kim took Gwak's military force as a challenge to the central power. In fact, some righteous army leaders criticized local officers' cowardly acts, but some local officers also used their power to check the righteous army. The Joseon court was afraid of the righteous army as a military force. Just after the end of the war, the central courtiers said that the central government had to gather military forces around Hanyang and weaken local power groups, such as the righteous army.¹⁹⁴ In the end Gwak Jaeu voluntarily broke up his army, abstained from food and pretended to be an ascetic. A historian of the *Sillok* commented that it seemed to be a set of self-preservation measures.¹⁹⁵

The Joseon court pressed the righteous army to reclaim the authority of the central government as well, while the court also sought to suppress it. When the court granted rewards to the participants in the war, they intentionally excluded the righteous army.¹⁹⁶ Around this stage the Joseon court seemed to invent and stress *Jaejojieun*. The court repeatedly underlined that Japanese troops were withdrawn only by the efforts of Ming's relief force, implicitly stressing that it was the Joseon court that drew the Ming

¹⁹³ Kim, Seong-u, *Joseonjunggi Gukgwa Sajok*, 350–353.

¹⁹⁴ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1598. 12. 18. 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1607. 5. 4. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Han, Myeonggi, "Imjin Waerangwa Myeongnara Gundae," 79.

relief force into the war. In the end, the righteous army had to be ignored and neglected since Ming's relief force and the Joseon court who requested them had won the war.

The Joseon court's second urgent domestic affair was dealing with the anger of the people toward the government in all parts of the country. King Seonjo and central government officials had personally witnessed the anger of Joseon civilians during the war. Courtiers reported that the reason why the public was alienated from the Royal family and government was due to royal princes' corruption and courtiers' corruption. They added that the need to win back the confidence of the people was an urgent one. On the other side, Japanese promises to protect the Joseon people from the court's tyranny were efficacious. They said that they could stop the war and remit tax. In fact Joseon people did not care the governors should be Joseon's Kings. Joseon court's misgovernment reached the peak around the mid Joseon and numerous people voluntarily went along with Japanese rule.¹⁹⁷ This was just three weeks after the outbreak of war. Meanwhile some people had intentionally written King Seonjo's escape route on the wall of a local office to let Japanese troops be aware of it.¹⁹⁸ When Japanese troops retreated from Hanyang, King Seonjo hesitated to return to the palace in fear of a popular riot.¹⁹⁹ The Joseon court was more afraid of their own people than of Japanese troops.

Now the Joseon court had two choices. One was to admit their misgovernment and soothe the anger of the people. The other was to reduce their responsibility and maintain public peace and order. If the Joseon court chose the first plan, they had to censure local officials and award the righteous armies. However, the court, as mentioned above,

¹⁹⁷ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 5. 3. 6.

¹⁹⁸ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1592. 6. 28. 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 6. 14. 1 / 3.

pressurised the righteous army and intentionally excluded them when they granted rewards to participants in the war. The Joseon court chose the second plan, and while conscious of popular anger chose not to soothe them.

Jaejojieun was apparently chosen and extended further by the Joseon court for political reasons. King Seonjo ordered a shrine to be built to Ming's governor-general Xing Jie (邢玠, ?-?) (see below Picture 6). He also wrote '*Jaejobeonbang*' (再造藩邦, The benefit of reconstruction of the feudatory) on the board himself and gave an order to hang it in front of the shrine.²⁰⁰



<Picture 6: Ming's General Xing Jie Monument, Myeongji University, Seoul >

²⁰⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1599. 10. 5. 1.

This was not the first time a shrine was built for a Ming general. Just after the victory in Pyeongyang in 1593 the Joseon court decided to build a shrine for Ming general Li Ru Song (李如松, 1549–1598).²⁰¹ It was of course the Ming Emperor Shen Zong (神宗皇帝, 1563–1620) who deserved praise. Emperor Shen Zong was a lazy administrator who only concentrated worked on this role for just three days in a month, but he was interested in the *Imjin* war and wanted to be updated with any news of it. He mainly took the side of Joseon whenever Ming's courtiers argued against a relief force dispatch, stationing or provisions. Thus, he used to be called "a Goryeo Emperor."²⁰² However, building a shrine for Emperor Shen Zong was a different issue. King Hyeonjong (顯宗, 1641–1674) had already ordered the building of a shrine for Emperor Shen Zong, but it fell behind when it encountered opposition. When King Hyeonjong checked the process of building a shrine, Jeong Chihwa (鄭致和, 1609-1677) opposed the plan of building a shrine for the Emperor. He said that there was no precedent for building a shrine for Chinese Emperor in a foreign land.²⁰³ Finally, the nineteenth King Sukjong (肅宗, 1674–1720) began to discuss the building of a shrine for Shen Zong which was, interestingly, about sixty years after Ming's fall.²⁰⁴ *Jaejojeun* of that time was no longer for Ming, but for Joseon.

The discourse of *Jaejojeun* was apparently political propaganda, but there was a significant change of the evaluation of the Ming by Joseon, from the king down to the commoners. As mentioned previously, before the *Imjin* war the Joseon court already believed that there was nothing to be learned from Ming.²⁰⁵ King Seonjo also stated

²⁰¹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 2. 2. 5.

²⁰² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1599. 2. 26. 2.

²⁰³ *Hyeongjong Sillok*, 1667. 6. 8. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Sukjong Sillok*, 1704. 1. 10. 1.

²⁰⁵ *Seonjo Sujeong Sillok*, 1574. 11. 1. 2.

that, “There was not a single good Chinese although I have met various Chinese. Cheating and deceit were their business, and wickedness and jealousy were what they liked... Avarice was deep in their mind. Generals as well as officials were all the same.”²⁰⁶ In addition, during the war Joseon people also saw the Ming relief force’s violence and arrogance, and suffered from it. The hostility against Ming’s relief force was expressed through folk tales, which was more intense than that against the Japanese troops.²⁰⁷ It seems apparent that Joseon people’s true feeling towards Ming after the war was more of hostility than a feeling of debt. Therefore, the superficial evaluation that Joseon felt a debt to Ming and that they tried to repay the Ming in subsequent years by resisting the Manchu should also be reconsidered.

In conclusion, the discourse of *Jaejojeun* was chosen for domestic Joseon reasons, and the *Imjin* war helped Joseon to escape from the blind devotion of Ming in terms of intellectual dependence. Joseon Neo-Confucianism went one more step forward due to the war.

Conclusion

The study of the development of the relationship between Ming and Joseon shows us that the relationship between them was not stable. Earlier in the dynasty there was a possibility of real military conflict between them, however, the crisis was smoothed over due to each side’s domestic political situation. Between the reign of King Sejong and King Seongjong diplomatic policy toward Ming was developed according to a Neo-

²⁰⁶ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1598. 12. 2. 7.

²⁰⁷ Im, Cheolho, *Selhwa*, 102–113.

Confucian worldview: serving the strong country. My analysis of the private and public discourse of the Joseon envoys to Ming indicates that before the *Imjin* war, in fact, Joseon Neo-Confucian literati had begun to realize the reality of Ming; that Ming was no longer an ideal Neo-Confucian society, and there was little to learn from them in terms of Neo-Confucianism. It is a decisive fact that needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand the discourse of *Jaejojieun*.

The dispatch of the Ming relief force was calculated in terms of Ming's own security policy, not as part of any Neo-Confucian duty to help a fellow Confucian country. My analysis of the discourse of *Jaejojieun* shows that it was a political propaganda tool to deal with Joseon domestic administration not diplomatic policy toward Ming. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati could not play their role as the intellectuals of the time and there was no specific need to either. On the contrary, as a local elite they led a righteous army. Although the solution for the first crisis was not a Neo-Confucian one, the *Imjin* war helped Joseon to escape from blind devotion to Ming and Ming civilization. The impact of the war brought a realization that the mission of the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati was not to copy Ming anymore. Ming was just a powerful neighbouring country and not an ideal Neo-Confucian society anymore. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati started to dream of an ideal Neo-Confucian society beyond Ming. Thereby, Joseon Neo-Confucianism developed a deeper understanding of Neo-Confucianism and a new dream of an ideal society during this stage.

3. First Neo-Confucian Solution: The Discourse of Sino-centrism

Following the *Imjin* war, the fall of Ming and rise of Qing turned the Sino-centric world on its head, and the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati had to deal with this changing geopolitical and philosophical reality. This was a massive problem for them because the barbarian Qing was in power and many Neo-Confucians could not serve the Qing as they had the Ming. The adoption of Sino-centrism, a concept that had existed in China previously, was the philosophical solution to this problem. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the meaning and significance of Sino-centrism as a solution adopted by Joseon Neo-Confucian intellectuals. In this chapter, I analyze what Sino-centrism was and how it was different from an anti-Qing stance. This issue can be subdivided into these questions; why did Later Jin invade Joseon? Did Joseon stimulate Later Jin? Did Later Jin punish Joseon? There are typical misunderstandings of these questions. In the first section I analyze this issue by assessing Joseon diplomatic policy towards Ming and Qing. Then, I take a three-pronged approach, first describing the international geopolitical context, second by analyzing theoretical and actual Neo-Confucian views of war, and third, by assessing Joseon's domestic political situation around the time of the Ming-Qing transition. This analysis will help form a clearer idea of the adoption of Sino-centrism at this point in time.

3. 1. Joseon's Diplomatic Policy toward Ming and Qing

There is a typical set of misunderstandings relating to Joseon's diplomatic policy toward

Ming and Qing; on one hand Gwanghaegun's adroit policy toward Later Jin (Qing) has been vastly overestimated, and on the other side King Injo's blatant pro-Ming and anti-Jin policy (崇明排金政策) has been harshly underestimated. These misunderstandings are derived from a colonialist historiography (滿鮮史觀). The Japanese historian Inaba first dealt with Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy, and Korean historians Hong Hi and Yi Beongdo followed his argument. Then, ironically, succeeding Korean nationalist historians tried to overcome this existing framework but hovered over the issues raised by colonial historiography.²⁰⁸ This section will study the misunderstanding of Joseon's diplomatic policy toward Qing and Ming, and the three kings, Seonjo, Gwanghaegun and Injo's diplomatic policies toward Ming and Qing will be compared with each other. In other words, this section doubts if Joseon's unskilled diplomatic policy stimulated Later Jin.

First, one of the most common misunderstandings is about Joseon diplomatic policy toward Later Jin (Qing). It would be better to trace back from King Seonjo's diplomatic policy toward Jurchen (Later Jin). Through the *Imjin* war King Seonjo obviously became one of the finest experts on military affairs whether he is underestimated or not since he could not prepare well against Japanese invasion. Even during the *Imjin* war King Seonjo did not neglect the collection of intelligence collection in northern territory of Korean peninsula although Joseon's main opponent was Japan in the south of the peninsula. He saw and heard for himself and grasped the reality of the northern regional situation and that of the northern barbarians through his refugee experience. With the practical tactical information he had acquired he carried out two basic policies. The first one was a self-defence policy (自強策). King Seonjo stated, "They (Jurchen) are not

²⁰⁸ Han, Myonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 156-159.

common barbarians. Even if we have ten thousand troops, we cannot protect ourselves from them.”²⁰⁹ He pointed out that a Burning Up Fields Strategy (淸野政策) was one of the best defence strategies. He also discerned that the Jurchen had the talent to ride horses and ordered to fight against them from hill-forts not in the open field. He used not only surrendered Japanese troops but also disguised spies to get latest intelligence on the Jurchen.²¹⁰ He too dispatched an envoy Sin Chungil (申忠一, 1554–1622) to spy on Jurchen, and Sin came back and reported on them with ninety-seven lists.²¹¹ Sin added detailed maps and made a book, which is known as *Geonjugijeongdogi* (建州紀程圖記). King Seonjo also maintained a conciliatory policy (羈縻策) at the same time.²¹² Joseon had conferred ranks on the Jurchen chiefs and also received Jurchen envoys at court. Joseon sometime provided monetary stipends to Jurchen chiefs who accepted formal recognition from Joseon. Members of the Jurchen elite, and later Jurchen commoners, also served in the Joseon royal bodyguard.²¹³

King Seonjo’s son, Gwanghaegun, suffered the ravages of the *Imjin* war as Crown Prince and witnessed his father’s military and diplomatic affairs. After he was enthroned, Gwanghaegun’s main diplomatic policies toward Jurchen (Later Jin) did not digress from his father’s two main policies, self-defence and conciliation. Gwanghaegun’s effort to gather intelligence should be praised, but it was also his father’s main concern, and the former’s conciliation policy was his father’s principle as well. Gwanghaegun’s main diplomatic policy, which has been evaluated highly by Korean nationalist historians, was not unique and was also adopted by King Injo.

²⁰⁹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1595. 10. 7. 4.

²¹⁰ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1595. 10. 7. 4

²¹¹ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1596. 1. 30. 4.

²¹² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1593. 10. 30. 1 / 1596. 2. 2. 1.

²¹³ Li, “State Building before 1644,” 15.

King Injo maintained Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy toward Later Jin, including the conciliation policy as mentioned above. One of the typical interpretations of the Injo court's blatant anti-Later Jin policy (排金策), that is that it caused the Later Jin's first invasion in 1627 (the *Jeongmyo* war), is not true. From the onset Injo's court planned to maintain the status quo toward Later Jin, although King Injo did not send condolences on Nurhaci's (1616–1626) death. Injo's court requested, when they heard that Ming general Mao Wenlong (毛文龍, 1576–1629) was preparing to dispatch troops against Later Jin, that the military operation against Later Jin should be stopped. In addition, Injo's court planned to disguise Joseon troops in Ming uniforms when Mao requested some guides for their military operation.²¹⁴ Up until just before the outbreak of Later Jin's first invasion, Injo's court did not want to give any military provocation to Later Jin, and Later Jin also did not commence hostilities against Joseon. Since Joseon was careful not to provoke Later Jin, Injo's court wondered why Later Jin invaded Joseon. When he was told of Later Jin's invasion, King Injo first asked, "Do they (Later Jin) want Ming's General Mao or us (Joseon)?"²¹⁵ It meant that King Injo had not given any stimulus to Later Jin apart from friendship with Mao.

Later Jin's Hong Taiji (皇太極, 1626–1643) also pointed out that their main business was to isolate Mao from Joseon.²¹⁶ However, in fact Hong Taiji developed a far-reaching plan, the conquest of Ming. Hong's strategy for the conquest of Ming included sporadic peace negotiations with the Ming in order first to gain control over Joseon and Mongol tribes. "Taking Peking," Hong Taiji supposedly said, "is like felling a big tree. One first needs to start from both sides (Mongol and Joseon) and then the big tree

²¹⁴ *Bibyeonsadeungrok*, 1624. 4. 27. 3.

²¹⁵ *Injo Sillok*, 1627. 1. 17. 1.

²¹⁶ Li, "State Building before 1644," 53.

(Ming) will fall.”²¹⁷ Under Hong Taiji’s master plan Later Jin also tried to establish a friendship contract with Joseon just a week before the outbreak of war. Of course the Joseon court doubted Later Jin’s sudden friendship contract proposal.²¹⁸

The real practical motive of Later Jin’s first invasion seems to have been based on their domestic issues. According to Li’s research, Later Jin invaded Joseon in search of grain.²¹⁹ In 1627 Later Jin’s economy was in crisis, and had been unstable after several years of ethnic conflict, their borders in the east, south, and west open to attack. The reorganization of the Chinese population after 1625, the large number of Mongol submissions, and widespread food shortages from bad weather that extended from northwestern China to Manchuria contributed to Later Jin’s economic difficulties. Famine drove people to banditry and, in some cases, to cannibalism. “If we (Later Jin) alone had to live on the grain produced in our country,” Hong Taiji wrote to King Injo in 1627, “there would be enough. But you must have heard that the Mongol Khan (Ligdan) is bad and that the Mongols have been coming over to us in an endless stream. These people need to be fed, yet there is not enough grain.”²²⁰

Therefore, the friendship contract between Later Jin and Joseon was quickly made, and the war ended in two months. Most Joseon courtiers also agreed to it. The assertion that Injo’s Restoration Group (反正功臣) was mainly opposed to making peace with Later Jin was also a myth. Injo’s Restoration group, Yi Gwi (李貴, 1557–1633), Kim Ryu (金瑬, 1571–1648), Sin Gyeongjin (申景禎, 1575–1643), Sim Giwon (沈器遠, 1587–1644) and Kim Jajeom (金自點, 1588–1651), agreed with the friendly contract with

²¹⁷ Li, “State Building before 1644,” 52.

²¹⁸ *Injo Sillok*, 1627. 1. 18. 6.

²¹⁹ Li, “State Building before 1644,” 53.

²²⁰ Li, “State Building before 1644,” 68 – 69.

Later Jin.²²¹

In brief, there was not a substantial difference between Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy and Injo's toward Later Jin. Both Gwanghaegun and Injo were careful not to provoke Later Jin. In other words, Injo's anti-Later Jin stance was not the reason for Later Jin's first invasion. Later Jin's domestic reason, especially the lack of grain, was one of main reasons for their first invasion.

Second, during the same period, Joseon's diplomatic policy toward Ming should be re-examined to answer the question; did Joseon's pro-Ming stance antagonise Later Jin? It would be better to start from the process of Ming's approval of Gwanghaegun as Crown Prince. In a word, for sixteen years, Ming held back approving Gwanghaegun as Crown Prince. Joseon court dispatched envoys five times for the thirteen years from 1592 to 1604, but Ming refused to approve the Crown Prince Gwanghaegun.²²² Finally, in 1608 after Gwanghaegun's enthronement, Ming decided to approve Gwanghaegun.²²³ For those sixteen years Gwanghaegun's status as Crown Prince had been shaken. Gwanghaegun had two rivals, his elder brother from the same mother and his new brother from the Queen. Gwanghaegun was the second son of King Seonjo's concubine (庶次子) and his elder brother Imhaegun (臨海君, 1574–1609) was still alive at that time. Furthermore, King Seonjo remarried and the new Queen was younger than Gwanghaegun. More surprisingly, King Seonjo had another son Yeongchangdaegun (永昌大君, 1606–1614). Actually, the new prince had real legitimacy since he was the

²²¹ *Injo Sillok*, 1627. 3. 3. 2.

²²² *Seonjo Sillok*, 1604. 11. 25. 6.

²²³ *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*, 1608. 12. 17. 2.

first legitimate son (嫡長子) from the Queen.²²⁴ King Seonjo also loathed Gwanghaegun since Gwanghaegun could not get Ming's approval for a decade. It was a very exceptional case. Even King Sejo and King Jungjong, who both usurped the throne, easily received Ming approval approval.

In fact Ming's approval was normally just a routine procedure. However, Gwanghaegun's case was very exceptional. According to Han's research, it seems that Ming's domestic political circumstances at that time delayed Gwanghaegun's approval. At that time Ming's Crown Prince was the first son of Shen Zong, but Shen Zong wanted his second son to become Crown Prince, which was opposed by Ming's Ministry of Rites. In this Ming domestic political context, if they approved King Seonjo's second son, Gwanghaegun, it would be a bad example.²²⁵ Gwanghaegun was appointed as Crown Prince although his elder brother was still alive. The Ministry of Rites of Ming, Shen Zong, King Seonjo, Gwanghaegun and Joseon courtiers all knew the situation. At any rate Gwanghaegun seemed to have developed a private abhorrence of Ming through the long tiresome period of gaining Ming approval.

There is another reason that Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy toward Ming seems to be weaker than at any other age. When Gwanghaegun dispatched Joseon relief forces for Ming, he ordered the General Gang Hongrip (姜弘立, 1560–1627) to do his best not to incur serious losses.²²⁶ There had been various interpretations of Gwanghaegun's order. 'A Theory of a Secret Letter', (密紙說)²²⁷ was insisted on by Tagawa Kozo

²²⁴ The succession to the throne by the legitimate son became one of the main issues after Gwanghaegun's enthronement, and it will be dealt with in the next chapter, 'Ritual Controversy'.

²²⁵ Han, Myonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 187–195.

²²⁶ *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*, 1619. 2. 3. 2.

²²⁷ It said that Gwanghaegun gave General Gang a secret letter that he should avoid fighting against

(田川孝三) in 1932, and Inaba Iwakichi (稲葉岩吉) vouched for this in 1933. The next discourse on this matter was developed using imperfect sources, *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*, which seems to have been embellished by Injo's coup supporters. In addition there are contradictory aspects in *Gwanghaegun Ilgi*. We have another reason to speculate on the real context, one derived from Ming's military situation. According to Huang's research, Ming's total strength was about 200,000 men, including Joseon forces. On the other side, at the high point of the campaign, all of Nurhaci's forces combined probably amounted to 50,000 to 60,000 men. Huang assumed that Ming had a numerical superiority of roughly two or three to one overall. However, the Ming divided their forces into four columns, while Nurhaci retained the opportunity to strike with his entire force on practically all occasions. In addition, Ming's army was financed from a variety of sources spread out over a large number of administrative units.²²⁸ Han Myeonggi also asserted that eighty percent of Joseon relief forces were already wiped out before they surrendered.²²⁹

There are various evaluations of Gwanghaegun's preconceived plan based on imperfect sources. Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy toward Ming should be understood from a Ming perspective. At any rate, whether Gwanghaegun privately loathed Ming or not, and whether Gwanghaegun issued another order or not, Ming was grateful to Gwanghaegun for the Joseon relief force. In brief, Ming thought Gwanghaegun was friendly to them, and Gwanghaegun confirmed their belief.

On the other hand, Injo's diplomatic policy toward Ming should be re-examined. Injo's

Later Jin and surrender in good time in order not to antagonise them.

²²⁸ Huang, "The Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li Reign 1567-1620," 579.

²²⁹ Han, Myonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 255 - 264.

coup party usurped the throne and pronounced three main reasons for Gwanghaegun's dethronement: Gwanghaegun's purges of his mother and brothers (廢母殺弟); excessive fiscal payment for constructing the royal palace; and an ungrateful diplomacy toward Ming.²³⁰ Ironically, Ming thought that Gwanghaegun was friendly to them, but Injo's coup supporters conceived that Gwanghaegun was essentially unfriendly to Ming.

At any rate, the real intention behind King Injo's pro-Ming stance seems to have been to get Ming's approval of his usurpation. When Ming heard of the 'Injo Restoration,' they recognized it as a military coup and did not approve of his enthronement. The relationship between the Ming court and Gwanghaegun's had been stable. Under these circumstances, King Injo's court tenaciously attempted to get Ming's approval for their legitimacy. The Ming court also stepped back from the first objection and began to use Injo's weak legitimacy for their benefit. After Ming's thorough investigation, vigorous debates and political accounts of their court demonstrate that finally approved Injo's enthronement, which took around two years. For these two years Injo's court was inclined to a pro-Ming stance.²³¹

The big difference between Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy and King Injo's toward Ming was to notify Ming's General Mao of details relating to Later Jin.²³² Although Gwanghaegun tried to hide his conciliatory policy toward Later Jin from Ming, Injo's court notified details to Ming through Mao. It is well understood that the Injo court adopted a more rigid pro-Ming stance. Gwanghaegun's policy made the relationship among Ming, Later Jin and Joseon stable. However, after Injo's new policy made

²³⁰ *Injo Sillok*, 1623. 3. 14. 7.

²³¹ Han, Myonggi, "Imjinwaerangwa Hanjunggwangye," 361 – 366.

²³² *Injo Sillok*, 1623. 3. 27. 1.

Ming's General Mao one of the delicate diplomatic issues between these three countries, Gwanghaegun's weak pro-Ming stance seems to have been a practical diplomatic policy. However, we should not overlook three things: 1) Gwanghaegun's private abhorrence relating to Ming's long delay for the Crown Prince approval; 2) Joseon relief forces were not able to defeat Later Jin, whether Gwanghaegun gave a secret letter or not; 3) The more important thing was that the relationship between Ming and Joseon was stable during the reign of Gwanghaegun. On the other hand, King Injo's diplomatic policy toward Ming was not much different from Gwanghaegun's one except reporting to Ming through Ming General Mao.

In conclusion, Joseon diplomatic policies toward Ming and Qing from King Seonjo to King Injo had been consistent. The real reason that Later Jin invaded Joseon seems to be Later Jin's domestic economic situation. Now it is a good moment to study Joseon's geopolitical circumstances around the time of the Ming-Qing transition in order to understand the reason why Qing invaded Joseon.

3.2. International Circumstances around the Ming-Qing Transition²³³

In this section, I analyzed of whether the relationship between Ming and Joseon based on the discourse of *Jaejojieun* was still a decisive factor to the triangle international relationship among Ming, Qing and Joseon or not. International chronological approaches could be a good method to understand the turbulent age at that time.

²³³ The detail of Qing's general history it mainly drawn from Gertraude Roth Li's "State Building Before 1644" in Willard J. Peterson ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 9, Cambridge University Press (pp. 9–72).

First, the major events between Nurhaci's appearance and the first Later Jin's invasion are listed below. These can be roughly divided into three stages from 1582 to 1627:

1582 Nurhaci (1559–1626) embarked on an inter-tribal feud that escalated into a campaign to unify the Jian Zhou Jurchen (建州女真) tribes.

1592–1598 *Imjin* and *Jeongyu* war

1608 Gwanghaegun enthronement

1616 Nurhaci consolidated the Jian Zhou region sufficiently to proclaim himself khan of 'Later Jin' (後金) in reference to the previous Jurchen dynasty.

1618 Nurhaci first attacks Ming

1619 Ming dispatch an army to attack Later Jin / Joseon also dispatches relief forces

1621 Nurhaci relocates his capital to Liadong

1623 Injo Restoration

1625 Nurhaci relocates his capital to Shenyang (later renamed Shengjing, 盛京)

1626 Nurhaci suffers his first major defeat by general Yuan Chong Huan (袁崇煥, 1584–1630) while laying siege to the Ming city of Ningyuan (寧遠城). Nurhaci dies and his eighth son, Hong Taiji, is enthroned

1627 The first Later Jin's invasion (the *Jeongmyo* war)

The first stage, from 1582 to 1616, was Jurchen's formation stage. Nurhaci took advantage of international disorder around the *Imjin* war and consolidated the Jian Zhou region sufficiently. In the second stage, Nurhaci first attacked Ming, but was defeated in

1618. Ming also attacked Later Jin but was defeated. When Ming requested a relief force from Joseon, Gwanghaegun dispatched General Gang's corps. The third stage starts with Hong Taiji's enthronement in 1626. Under Hong Taiji's expansion policy before the second attack against Ningyuan, Hong Taiji first invaded Joseon, which is known as the *Jeongmyo* war.

From the international viewpoint Gwanghaegun's adroit practical diplomacy or King Injo's blatant pro-Ming and anti-Later Jin policy seemed not to be a crucial influence on Later Jin's foundation and invasion. The *Imjin* war seemed to be a major chance for Nurhaci's unifying Jurchen tribes during its first stage. Regardless of Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy, however, at any rate Joseon could not avoid participation in the Ming-Later Jin war. Until 1618 Nurhaci focused on his tribe's unification and appears not to have had any concern regarding Joseon. At the same time, Nurhaci attacked Ming according to his own plan, and Ming also administrated state affairs according to their own plan regardless of Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy. In other words, it was not Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy that protected Joseon from Later Jin's invasion. Due to Gwanghaegun's diplomatic skill the scale of Joseon relief forces were minimized and another relief force appears not to have been dispatched.

Injo's anti-Later Jin policy did not cause their first invasion either. Actually, King Injo's diplomatic policy toward Later Jin was not much different from Gwanghaegun's, as mentioned previously. During the reign of Nurhaci, regardless of the Injo Restoration, Nurhaci changed his capital twice after the first battle against Ming. It seemed that Nurhaci only focused on his domestic affairs. Hong Taiji's attack also appears not to be closely related with Injo's diplomatic policy toward Ming or Later Jin. Hong Taiji just

wanted to probe the state of Ming's ally Joseon before he attacked Ming on a full scale. Regardless of Injo's diplomatic policy Joseon had been a friendly state with Ming for the previous two hundred years, which was not a secret. Furthermore, another motive of Later Jin's invasion was, as mentioned previously, their domestic context, such as a halt of trade with Ming, famine and extended territory, and so on. Therefore, Later Jin tried to contract a friendship with Joseon within a week of the outbreak of the war, as mentioned in the first section.

From the point of view of international relations it seems that Gwanghaegun's diplomatic policy could not relieve Joseon from international conflicts between Ming and Later Jin, and Injo's diplomatic policy was not the main cause of Later Jin's first invasion either. Later Jin just followed their master plan to unify Jurchen, establish Later Jin and conquer Ming. Later Jin's first invasion would be better discussed within their master plan.

The next stage is between Later Jin's first invasion and Ming's fall. In a word, no one could know Qing would finally conquer Ming before Qing's second invasion in 1636. From our perspective, it is easy to say that Joseon should have changed their diplomatic channel from Ming to Qing. However, if one follows a chronological approach from the Later Jin's first invasion to Ming's fall, it would be difficult to make this conclusion. The events of 1626 overlap and help to explain it. This stage can be divided into two main parts:

1626 Nurhaci suffers his first major defeat by General Yuan Chong Huan

Nurhaci dies and his eighth son, Hong Taiji is enthroned

- 1627 Hong Taiji first invade Joseon (*Jeongmyo* war)
Hong attack Ningyuan again but is defeated
- 1634 Hong creates his own artillery corps (重軍) with the help of captured Chinese artisans
- 1635 The fully incorporation of Manchu's Mongolian allies, changing their tribe's name from Jurchen to Manchu
- 1636 Changing their dynasty's name from Later Jin to Qing
The second invasion of Joseon (the *Byeongja* war)
- 1637 The creation of the first two Han Banners
- 1642 The increase of Han Banners to eight
- 1643 Hong Taiji's death
- 1644 Li Zicheng's (李自成, 1606-1645) rebellion
Wu Sangui's (吳三桂, 1612–1678) surrender
Ming's fall

In the first phase Nurhaci was wounded in his first major defeat by General Yuan of Ningyuan and eventually died. The superior firepower of Ming forces was apparent until 1626, due to newly acquired Portuguese cannons. Nurhaci's eighth son, Hong Taiji, was enthroned and attacked Ningyuan after the first invasion of Joseon but was defeated again. To redress the technological and numerical disparity in 1634 Hong Taiji created his own artillery corps. In 1635 the Manchu's Mongolian allies were fully incorporated into a separate Banner hierarchy under direct Manchu command and changed the name of their people to Manchu and the dynasty changed to Qing. Hong Taiji then invaded Joseon again (the *Byeongja* war). Up until 1636 Hong Taiji's

intention was an extremely straightforward one, that is to expand his dynasty, but the impregnable fortress Shan Hai Guan (山海關) was still unconquered. After the *Byeongja* war Hong Taiji created the first two Han Banners and increased them in number to eight, but he died in 1643. Until General Wu's surrender in 1644 Qing could not advance beyond Shan Hai Guan and Ming still occupied the mainland (中原). Hong Taiji also could not advance his troops' to Peking. In other words, Qing spent two generations, Nurhaci and Hong Taiji, before finally triumphing over Ming in 1644. The *Byeongja* war (1636) raged for eight years before Ming's fall. When the Ming capital at Peking fell to peasant rebels in 1644, the most effective fighting force on the continent belonged to the Qing. Dennerline argues, however, that the ultimate success of Qing could not be predicted at that time.²³⁴ Ming's final fall was a distant dream even to Qing. Of course, there was no clear reason to change Joseon's diplomatic affiliation from Ming to Qing until the *Byeongja* war from the point of view of the international situation at the time.

There are strident criticisms of Joseon's stubborn pro-Ming stance, especially around the period of Qing's second invasion. These argue that the Joseon court was impractical, blind in devotion, irresponsible and so on, despite the fact that they had experienced Later Jin's first invasion.²³⁵ However, the experience of the first invasion tells another lesson as well. The Later Jin of the first invasion wanted a friendly relationship as soon as possible, so it was neither a long nor a severe war. The Joseon court might have expected Qing to pull out soon, just like the first time. In addition, their criticism mainly focused on Joseon courtiers' chauvinistic attitudes to Qing without knowledge of the military gap between Ming and Joseon in reality.

²³⁴ Dennerline, "The Shun-Chih Reign," 73.

²³⁵ Yi, Samseong, "Dongasiaeui Jeonjaenggwa Pyeonghwa," 510-558.

In conclusion, international circumstances around the Ming-Qing transition could tell a different story that is that Later Jin invaded Joseon with their own master plan regardless of Joseon's diplomatic policy. In addition, there was no clear reason to change Joseon's diplomatic channel from Ming to Qing around the *Byeongja* war. No one could tell that the Qing would finally prevail. By now there was only one issue left: Joseon's preparation for war.

3.3. Joseon's Preparation for War

It is easy to say that one should prepare for war since no one could expect the outbreak of war. On this basis Joseon seemed to have more reasons to prepare for war given the turbulent international situation created by the Ming-Qing transition. This section deals with Joseon's preparation for war both theoretically and practically.

The Neo-Confucian discourse on war is a good starting point to discuss Joseon's theoretical preparation for war. A famous dialogue between Confucius and one of his followers, Tsze-Kung (子貢) is detailed below:

Tsze-kung asked about government. The Master (Confucius) said, "The requisites of government are that there might be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler."

Tsze-kung said, "If it cannot be helped, and one of these must be dispensed with, which of the three should be foregone first?" "The military equipment," said the Master...

(*Analects*, chap. 12)

According to the Master's teaching, the military equipment has less importance than two other things, sufficiency of food and the confidence of the people in their ruler. Therefore, not only for the Song or Ming in China but also Joseon in Korea adherents to Neo-Confucianism appeared rather effeminate. Normally, Nomadic people are said to be bellicose, but Song, Ming and Joseon having a Neo-Confucianist political philosophy avoid engaging in war.

There is another instance of the Master's teaching on rulers in the *Analects*:

The Master said, "To rule a country of a thousand chariots, there must be reverent attention to business, and sincerity; economy in expenditure, and love for men; and the employment of the people at the proper seasons."

(*Analects*, chap. 1)

The last part, "the employment of the people at the proper seasons" (使民以時) must a dynasty's provision of public services, such as constructing irrigation facilities, building palaces, repairing castles, military service and so on. Of these military service (軍役) was one of the heaviest services. Therefore, rulers should consider the farming seasons when they mobilize the people for military affairs. It meant that it was not recommendable to mobilize the people for war or even military education during farming seasons. Finally, it was not advisable to mobilize, educate and maintain troops for war in peacetime under the teachings of the *Analects* and the imperatives of agriculture economy.

In addition, Neo-Confucianism had theoretical limitations to prepare for war unlike Sun Tzu's (孫子) teaching (兵家). There is a famous phrase from Sun Tzu's *the Art of War* (孫子兵法): "If you know your enemies and know yourself, you would not be dangerous even in a hundred battles" (知彼知己 百戰不殆). Neo-Confucianism, however, teaches the opposite, and its concern lies mainly with 'knowing yourself'.²³⁶ According to Neo-Confucian thought a man interacts with the world from his birth to his death, which happens in his mind (心). Neo-Confucianism also teaches that a man's mind has the ability to know Heaven's Principle (天理) from his birth. With this mind, a man can understand an object since the Heaven's Principle lies in every object, such as a man's mind. This process could be called perception, inference, and so on. There are various debates on the process of a man's perception, but there is a common premise that a man can perceive the world with his mind from his birth and his mind has the Heaven's Principle.²³⁷ So 'knowing the other' begins with 'knowing my mind.' On this account, 'knowing my mind' is the beginning and the final goal in the Neo-Confucian philosophy. 'Knowing my mind' is the most urgent task, and 'knowing the others' as a secondary issue is slightly overlooked. According to Mencius' teaching, if one passes the 'knowing my mind' stage, every problem should be solved. It must be understood as an idealistic and impractical theory, but the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati strongly believed that they should care about the 'knowing my mind' aspect first.

In brief, the Neo-Confucian 'knowing my mind' must be less practical than Sun Tzu's 'knowing the other' strategy in the field of war. The Joseon literati as well as courtiers strongly believed in Neo-Confucianism. There was no clear theoretical reason to

²³⁶ Pak, Wonjae, Yuhakeun Eotteokge Hyeonsilgwa Mannatneunga, 53-74.

²³⁷ Kim, Taenyeon, "Jigak," 299-321.

prepare for war in peacetime Joseon.

On the other hand, Joseon's practical preparations for war should be studied next. There is a real estimation of the expense for maintaining troops in wartime in the eighteenth century:

Yi I's asserted that Joseon should train 100,000 troops before the *Imjin* war. It is said to be a prevision. We have plenty of loafers so it is not difficult to mobilize troops when a war breaks. But it is not an easy business to feed them. Our people are hungry if they do not have rice of two *doe* (about 1.2 litres)²³⁸ per day. If there are 100,000 troops, they eat rice of 20,000 *mal* (about 120,000 litres) per day... If they were trained for a month, they need rice of 1,330 *seok* (about 3,600,000 litres). There must be cavalry soldiers but hay for horses was omitted. In addition one horse can load 20 *mal* when the troops march. If so, they need 1,000 horses for one day rice, 20,000 *mal*. Those 1,000 horses also need 1,000 dray-horse men. These 1,000 dray-horse men are omitted in the 100,000 troops. Hay for 1,000 horses and rice for 1,000 dray-horse men are also omitted in the 20,000 *mal*. If they march just for ten days, rice for troops and hay for horses cannot be calculated. Moreover expenditure for weapons is excluded... We just hope that there will be no further war. If that happens, we must lose the war...²³⁹

²³⁸ According to the Korean conversion table in the twenty-first century, one *doe* is about 1.8 litres. But one *doe* of the late Joseon was about 0.6 litres (Kim, Byeongha, "Joseon Sidaeeui Doryangheongjedo," 11)

²³⁹ *Seonghosaseol*, Vol. 13, 人事門, 預養兵條 (accessed Sept. 20, 2013, http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&url=/itkcdb/text/nodeViewIframe.jsp?bizName=MK&seojiId=kc_mk_g008&gunchaId=av013&munchId=01&finId=046&NodeId=&setid=5414677&Pos=0&TotalCount=1&searchUrl=ok)

Preparing for war in peacetime becomes a real expense. Even in the twenty-first century, it is a serious business to prepare for war. In 2011 the national defence expenditure of South Korea was about 10 percentage of GDP. Increasing this by just one percent point would generate sharp political debates, although North and South Korea are in a state of armistice. Therefore, the common denunciation that the Joseon court did not prepare for war had little persuasive power in reality.

In conclusion, it was not a recommendable policy to mobilize and maintain troops in peacetime in Neo-Confucian theory. In reality preparing for war was not as easy as some think.

3.4. Joseon's Domestic Political Context around Ming-Qing Transition

Joseon's particular situation at this point, especially its domestic political context, should be studied. The discourse of war detailed in the previous section is concerned with a general war. However, the fact that Joseon's opponent in the seventeenth century was Qing is very significant. There was a similar case in the early Joseon, but the opponent at that time was Ming. As discussed in the first chapter, in the end Joseon did not conduct any actual military operation against Ming's threatening attitudes. It might have been easier to stop military action since the opponent was Ming, yet by now Joseon's main opponent had changed to Qing, thus ensuring that Joseon's domestic political context was totally different. In addition, in terms of the Joseon court there was a significant change between Later Jin's first and second invasions. This change is a good clue to understanding our main issue, Sino-centrism.

Josoen's domestic political situation around the Ming-Qing transition was special. King Injo suffered from a shaky kingship. It considerably influenced Joseon diplomatic policy toward Later Jin, especially before the humiliating surrender to Hong Taiji. There were two Restorations in the entire history of the Joseon dynasty. The first one was the Jungjong and the other the Injo Restoration. These two events had some similarities, but also a few differences. Most of all the Jungjong Restoration enjoyed public support since Yeonsangun's eccentric conduct violated all legitimate expectations. The Jungjong Restoration party emphasized Yeonsangun's misrule, especially violations of Neo-Confucian morality. The Injo Restoration group, however, did not enjoy public support to the same extent.²⁴⁰ The Injo party also emphasized Gwanghaegun's purges of his mother and brothers, excessive fiscal payments for constructing the Royal Palace and a contradictory diplomatic policy toward Ming.²⁴¹ However, King Injo's rule had been unstable. For the first eight years of his reign, from 1623 to 1631, plots against Injo's court were planned and pursued eight times.

King Injo needed to stabilize his authority, and his urgent task was to head off the possibility of any other coup. However, Injo court's plan went awry by reason of public opinion and the shaky international situation. From the beginning, Injo court's diplomacy toward the Later Jin was not different from Gwanghaegun's. On this account, around the period of Later Jin's first invasion, most Injo courtiers approved of making friendly contract with Later Jin. King Injo also agreed with them. Everything seemed fine, but the situation suddenly changed. Censorial officers, who had opposed the treaty,

²⁴⁰ Yi, Youngchun, *Joseon Hugi Wangwigyeseung Yeongu*, 153.

²⁴¹ *Injo Sillok*, 1623. 3. 14. 7.

sent a memorial that the treaty of peace and amity was a form of surrender in reality.²⁴² Neo-Confucian literati outside of the court also criticized Injo courtiers' effortless capacity to surrender in concluding a friendly contract. They also criticized the Injo court's diplomacy, which was little different from Gwanghaegun's. There was also a peculiar episode in that some Joseon people were arrested for swearing at Later Jin's envoy.²⁴³ Injo's court should have shown a different diplomacy from Gwanghaegun's to all relevant groups, including Censorial officers, Neo-Confucian literati and even commoners.

Before long Injo's court got a second opportunity to show their strong anti-Qing stance in contrast to Gwanghaegun. At Qing's second invasion most courtiers were opposed to making a friendly contract, unlike during the first invasion. They had to present their distinctive diplomatic policy to earn public respect. Yi Samseong criticizes that they had to learn from the first invasion and prepare for another attack.²⁴⁴ This is of course true, but they learned another lesson from their experience, which was that they had to hold a strong anti-Qing stance under any circumstances. During the first invasion Later Jin had no clear motive to invade Joseon except for economic reasons, and Ming also agreed to friendly contract between Later Jin and Joseon. There were enough reasonable reasons to establish friendly relations with Later Jin, but censorial courtiers, Neo-Confucian literati, as well as commoners, criticized the courtiers' supporting friendly contract with Later Jin. Injo's court had to show their justification for the Restoration in order to gain public support. On the one hand, their strong anti-Qing stance seems to be impractical, but on the other hand this was a very realistic political position at this moment.

²⁴² *Injo Sillok*, 1627. 2. 15. 11.

²⁴³ *Injo Sillok*, 1627. 12. 28. 1.

²⁴⁴ Yi, Samseong, "Dongasiaeui Jeonjaenggwa Pyeonghwa," 532–533.

A pro-Qing stance, however, became a main diplomatic position after the humiliating surrender to Qing. Ironically or inevitably, King Injo had a double position between the two opposing sides, the pro- and anti-Qing positions. We can identify a representative for each side: Choe Myeonggil (崔鳴吉, 1586–1647) and Kim Sangheon (金尙憲, 1570–1652). In the final stage of Qing's second invasion Choe Myeonggil took the lead of the friendship contract with Qing and composed a draft for it. Kim Sangheon read Choe's draft and tore it up and then strongly appealed against the contract before King Injo. Kim was overcome and tried to commit suicide. It is said that his family found and saved him. After this Kim's whereabouts were unknown for a while. At the moment of the humiliating surrender to Qing around the *Samjeondo*, Kim did not serve King Injo and returned much later. Choe, as a courtier, tried to end the war, but Kim shirked his courtier duty at the fatal moment. Choe seemed to be a patriot, and Kim a coward, but King Injo neither praised Choe nor punished Kim. He kept each of them in different hands. King Injo needed a courtier like Choe, who could face up to reality and come up with the next best plan. However, a king desperately needed a courtier like Kim, who would serve Ming regardless of troubled situations. It meant that a servant like Choe could change even a king's opinion given unavoidable circumstances, but a servant like Kim would follow a king under any conditions. At the fatal moment, ironically, it was Choe who served King Injo, not Kim. King Injo seemed to be irresolute,²⁴⁵ but, as a king, he should choose between two sides according to the context.²⁴⁶

Historians of the *Sillok* judged Choe Myeonggil and Kim Sangheon by another standard. Directly after the humiliating surrender the Joseon court discussed whether it should inform Ming about their surrender. At that moment Choe said that “we (Joseon)

²⁴⁵ Pak, Hyeonmo, “Jeongmyohorangieui Guknaeoe Jeongchi,” 228.

²⁴⁶ Bu, Namcheol, “Josoensidaeeui Daeoejeongjaenggwa Yogyojeok Hwajeonron,” 97.

have to inform but emphasize our inevitable situation”. A historian of the *Sillok* added this: “Choe urged to make a friendship contract from the beginning. But now he said that we should inform Ming. Does it come from his true heart?”²⁴⁷



<Picture 7: *Samjeondobi* (三田渡碑), Songpagu, Seoul>

²⁴⁷ *Injo Sillok*, 1637. 2. 9. 5.

On the contrary, a historian of the *Sillok* added Kim Sangheon's evaluation after Kim's attempted suicide. Kim revived Neo-Confucian principle.²⁴⁸ A great many courtiers requested Kim's punishment since he shirked his duty as a courtier on that day and fled. King Injo, however, rejected it using some pretext or other. At this moment a historian of the *Sillok* deplored the public's misunderstanding of Kim.²⁴⁹ King Injo adopted a double sided or neutral position but the evaluation of the following generation, especially historians' judgment, inclined toward Kim.

Joseon had been hovered between a pro- and anti-Qing stance given the unpredictable situation. No one can say which diplomatic stance was proper in terms of the international geopolitical situation, the Neo-Confucian theoretical preparing for war, Joseon's real preparations for war and Joseon's domestic political context. Under these delicate conditions Joseon intellectuals developed a Neo-Confucian solution, Sino-centrism.

3.5. Discourse of Sino-centrism and Joseon Neo-Confucianism

It is said that Joseon's pro-Ming stance based on *Jaejojieun* simply transitioned into an anti-Qing stance. However, Joseon does not seem to have adhered to a strict pro-Ming position and was sometimes inclined to a pro-Qing stance according to the international context. There were various discourses of diplomatic policy around at the time of the Ming-Qing transition. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati hovered between pro-Qing and anti-Qing positions. These two trends were of course natural reactions against

²⁴⁸ *Injo Sillok*, 1637. 1. 28. 6.

²⁴⁹ *Injo Sillok*, 1638. 7. 29. 3.

external forces at any time, yet the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati developed a unique theory based on Neo-Confucianism. They justified the new relationship between Qing and Joseon under the terms of Neo-Confucian legitimacy. It was one of the first innovations of the late Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the intellectual field.

On one hand, most Joseon courtiers took a pro-Qing stance just after Qing's second invasion, although there were still opponents among censorial courtiers, the out of court Neo-Confucian literati and commoners. King Injo also placed responsibility for the defeat on courtiers taking an anti-Qing stance. Surprisingly, even among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati a trend accepting Qing as a real power appeared. During the *Imjin* war, there was a fashion to study the *Changes*, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In the end, the fashion established a firm base for the development of Xianshu xue (象數學). This applies image (象), numeral (數) and yin-yang (陰陽) to present the distinctions, inter-relations and the order of things. According to Xian Shu Xue, Ming's fall and Qing prospering could be explained according to the changing of numbers and accepted as an unavoidable fate.

One of the representatives of the pro-Qing group, Choe Myeonggil, also explained Qing's prosperity by referencing Xian Shu Xue.²⁵⁰ In the 1650s Yi Dansang (李端相, 1628–1669) and Pak Sedang (朴世堂, 1629–1703), Choe's next generation, also accepted Qing's prosperity as fate.²⁵¹ When the Southern Ming (1644–1662) seriously thought about carrying on their war towards the Yangtze region, Ming's military operation reached its peak in 1658 and 1659.²⁵² However, Qing's success seemed to be

²⁵⁰ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 45–55.

²⁵¹ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 122.

²⁵² Struve, "The Southern Ming, 1644-1662," 717–718.

an unshakable reality not only for Yi and Pak but also for other Joseon intellectuals. Moreover, Jang Yu (張維, 1587–1638) thought that both Chinese (華) and barbarians (夷) shared the same nature (性), one bestowed from Heaven. Choe Myeonggil also agreed with Jang's conception of human nature. This idea also influenced Jo Seonggi (趙聖期, 1638–1689), Yi Segu (李世龜, 1646–1700) and Jeong Jedu (鄭齊斗, 1649–1736).²⁵³ A pro-Qing stance based on Xian Shu Xue was apparently fashioned not only at court but also among late Joseon Neo-Confucian literati at that time. Its influence was felt in subsequent intellectual trends. Whether human nature was the same or not became one of the main issues of the Horak Controversy in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century.

On the other hand, there was an anti-Qing trend associated with the Northern Campaign (北伐論), that is, a military plan to attack Qing. However, there was actually little impetus behind Joseon's preparation for the Northern Campaign. King Hyojong's Northern Campaign is famous in terms of its nationalist symbolism but, surprisingly, there is no academic research on it to date. The Northern Campaign sought to avenge Ming, the centre of Chinese civilization, by attacking Qing, the barbarian nation but, ironically, a revenge on Qing with military force weakened Neo-Confucian justification in theory.

In a word, revenge on Qing with military force was not based on Neo-Confucianism. The possibility to attack Qing and the real preparation behind the revenge was another issue. 'The humiliation at Ping Cheng' (平城之憂)²⁵⁴ was used as a special term

²⁵³ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hapungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 84.

²⁵⁴ This idiom originated from the old story of Liu Bang, the first Emperor of the Han dynasty. When he

indicating revenge on Qing among Joseon courtiers.²⁵⁵ Liu Bang (劉邦, 256 or 247–195 BCE) and Ping Cheng were substituted for King Injo and *Namhansanseong* (Namhan hill-fort). Han Emperor Wu (武帝, BC. 141–87) said that he never forgot his forefather's 'humiliation at Ping Cheng' and used it for his military campaign. King Hyojong evaluated Emperor Wu highly since the latter did not forget Liu's 'humiliation at Ping Cheng' (*Injo Sillok*, an epitaph, 誌文). However, Zhu Xi criticized Emperor Wu. Zhu said that he should have not attacked Xiongnu (匈奴) with military force but civilized them if he really wanted to exact revenge on them.²⁵⁶ It meant that Neo-Confucianism preferred the enlightenment of barbarians to their conquest using military force. From the point of view of Neo-Confucianism a Northern Campaign should be planned and carried out not by military power but by the excellence of high civilization.

Finally, Sino-centrism emerged and satisfied the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati of that time on two scores. They did not need to worry about the possibility of realization from the point of view of military power. This new dream could heal Joseon literati's wounded pride as it proved they were the more civilized country compared to the barbarian Qing. In military reality, Joseon's inferiority in strength was not an issue anymore. In Neo-Confucian theory, the enlightenment of the barbarian Jurchen satisfied the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in countenance. Furthermore, the last bastion of Neo-Confucianism and the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's dream of becoming the legitimate successor of Chinese civilization could be realized under Sino-centrism. The ideal society of the Neo-Confucian literati in the seventeenth century was a Joseon-

attacked Xiongnu (匈奴), Liu Bang had been besieged for eight days. Emperor Wu referred to 'the humiliation at Ping Cheng' and used it in his military campaign.

²⁵⁵ *Hyojong Sillok*, 1649. 8. 23. 4.

²⁵⁶ *Zhu Xi Yu Lei* (朱子語類), Vol. 135, <history (歷史)>.

enlightened Qing as the successor to Chinese civilization.

Sino-centrism, however, was not based on the ethnocentric perspective that regards China to be the centre of civilization and superior to all other nations. The ideology emphasized the sharp divide between China's own culture (華) and other barbarians (夷).²⁵⁷ On the same grounds, Joseon was merely one of the barbarians. This barbarity, however, was not tested by race, religion, language or national origin, but by civilization.²⁵⁸ This differentiation by civilization had been recognized from Confucius' age onwards. When he praised Guan Zhong (管仲, ?–645 BCE), Confucius said, “but for Gwan Zhong, we should now be wearing our hair dishevelled, and the lappets of our coats buttoning on the left side” (被髮左衽).²⁵⁹ Confucius expressed barbarity by reference to different hairstyle and dress, not ethnicity. Mencius also said, “I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land to change barbarians, but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians.”²⁶⁰ He was convinced of the superiority of Chinese civilization and the changeability of barbarians if they encountered the excellence of an advanced civilization.

Superiority based on the civilization and the changeability of barbarians could also open another possibility to both Chinese and barbarians. On the one hand, barbarians could become Chinese when they advanced to the Chinese level of civilization. When someone worried about Confucius' wishing to go and live among the nine wild tribes of the east, Confucius said, “If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would

²⁵⁷ Kim, Hyun Jin, *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China*, 31–33.

²⁵⁸ Li, Zhajie, “Traditional Chinese World Order,” 30.

²⁵⁹ *Analects*, Chap 14.

²⁶⁰ *Mencius*, Chap. 5.

there be?”²⁶¹ On the other hand, the Chinese could also become barbarians if they degraded themselves through uncivil practices. Confucius lived in the Spring and Autumn Period (春秋時代, 770–476 BCE) and suffered the collapse of observances of propriety and music (禮樂) himself. Confucius lamented it and of course emphasized the recovery of Chinese civilization. Until that time, however, Chinese civilization meant just the rule of the Zhou emperor. Confucius’ main interest was always to recover Zhou’s order (周禮), and the concept of Chinese civilization remained rather vague.

Sino-centrism had developed through these two stages. At the first stage Confucianism centred on Chinese civilization. Through the Western Han dynasty (BCE 206–AD 24) Confucianism became the state ideological orthodoxy. During the Tang dynasty Han Yu (韓愈, 768–824) finally placed Confucianism at the centre of Chinese civilization. Han placed Buddhism and Taoism on the barbaric side as a heresy, and Confucianism on the Chinese side as the orthodoxy. Chinese civilization could take a concrete shape, Confucianism.²⁶² Civilization did not mean just hairstyle and dress anymore.

The second development was made in the Song dynasty, which had ended the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period (五代十國 時代), but their military power could not guarantee national security from the threats of neighbouring states. In the end they lost control of the traditional birthplace of the Chinese civilization along the Yellow River, and were pushed southward along the Yangtze River. Under these circumstances in the Southern Song (南宋) period, Sino-centrism took one more step forward. It was Zhu Xi who explained the miserable situation of that time with the cosmology of

²⁶¹ *Analects*, Chap. 9.

²⁶² Woo Kyeong-sup, “Songsiyaeoleui Hwairongwa Joseonjunghwajueuieui Seongrip,” 263.

principle (理) and material force (氣). The reality that barbarians occupied the main Chinese lands along the Yellow River should be accepted, but it was just controlled by the variable factor, material force. However, the invariable fact or principle was that the Southern Song was the centre of civilization (中華). Neo-Confucianism, one of the schools of Song Learning (宋學) stimulated the national emotion of the lost land and bonded with Sino-centrism. After Song was completely conquered by the Mongols, Neo-Confucianism became the only shelter for Song's refugees.²⁶³

Zhu-Xi's developed Sino-centrism along with Neo-Confucianism was handed on to Joseon, but Joseon Neo-Confucians did not put much of a premium on Sino-centrism apart from Gija worship before the Ming-Qing transition. According to Han Youngwoo's study, Joseon recognized Gija as the symbol of Korean culture from the first stage of the new dynasty. Jeong Dojeon proposed 'Joseon' as the name of the new dynasty, which was based on the idea that the new dynasty was the successor to Gija Joseon. Meanwhile, during the reign of King Sejong, there was a move to stress the independence of Gija from China. Then Yi I attributed the high level of Korean civilization and culture to Gija which, in his view, was as high as that of China.²⁶⁴ Until that time Sino-centrism was not an urgent issue since the Ming dynasty still existed in China. The *Imjin* war put the relationship between Ming and Joseon on a sound footing. There was no practical need to develop Sino-centrism in Joseon.

The Ming's fall and Qing's victory, however, changed the situation. It was Song Siyeol (宋時烈, 1607–1689) who rediscovered the meaning of Sino-centrism to explain the

²⁶³ Ji, Duhwan, "Joseonjeongieui Jongbeopjedoeui Ihaegwajeong," 5–6.

²⁶⁴ Han, Yeongwoo, "Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties," 358–370.

radical situation. Zhu Xi had only been recognized as a synthesizer of Neo-Confucianism in Song Siyeol's time. However, Song Siyeol wanted to focus on the meaning of Zhu Xi's historical context. As mentioned above, the Song dynasty was pushed southward along the Yangtze River. The Song dynasty's inferiority in military force was an unchangeable factor. To explain the miserable reality was the responsibility of contemporary intellectuals. Zhu Xi explained the situation with reference to Neo-Confucian cosmology and Sino-centrism. Song Siyeol recognized Joseon's situation around Ming-Qing transition as similar to what prevailed during Zhu Xi's era, the Southern Song period. Song Siyeol recognized Zhu Xi as the rediscoverer of Sino-centrism, as well as a synthesizer of Neo-Confucianism.²⁶⁵ In the end, Song Siyeol wanted to be Joseon's Zhu Xi from the point of view of rediscovering of Sino-centrism. Song Siyeol developed a theoretical basis for the revenge on Qing with Sino-centrism, which was, of course, not by military force but by advanced civilization.

While the idea of accepting Qing under a pro-Qing stance seemed practical, it was not based on the Neo-Confucian discipline. In the Neo-Confucian view, it was not possible to accept the Qing, barbarians. On the other hand, however, the anti-Qing stance's idea of direct military vengeance was neither practical nor theoretically sound under Neo-Confucianism. In military reality, raising an army to avenge the Ming was impossible. In Neo-Confucian theory military vengeance was not acceptable. In this sense, the discourse of Sino-centrism was different from both a pro- anti-Qing stance. Under the discourse of Sino-centrism military vengeance was excluded. Hence the actual gap between the military powers did not prevent the realization of Sino-centrism. The pride of advanced civilization had already existed on a higher plane than even Ming itself.

²⁶⁵ *Songjadaejeon*, Vol. 213, Accessed Sept. 20, 2013, http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MM&url=/itkcdb/text/bookListIframe.jsp?bizName=MM&seojiId=kc_mm_a367&gunchaid=&NodeId=&setid=477203.

Therefore, Sino-centrism was the optimum answer, which satisfied both the practical and theoretical perspectives of that time.

The discourse of Sino-centrism advanced to satisfy another new task. After the Southern Ming's fall in 1662, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati believed that their role as the last bastion in realizing Neo-Confucianism was bestowed from Heaven. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's dream, even before the *Imjin* war in mid-sixteenth century, to become a legitimate successor of Chinese civilization was not a daydream anymore. It was the primary need of the mid-seventeenth century. A revenge on Qing was not just a vengeful feeling. Heaven had bestowed a Neo-Confucian mission on Joseon Neo-Confucians. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati wanted to enlighten the barbarian Qing with the high level of Neo-Confucian civilization and rebuild Joseon as the last bastion of Neo-Confucianism.

Conclusion

A typical misunderstanding was that Joseon diplomatic policy toward Qing was based on Neo-Confucianism, which was not the case. The Joseon did not give Qing cause to invade; this is an example of where critics blame Neo-Confucianism for the internal and external problems of Joseon. In terms of the international geopolitical context, Qing's invasions were driven by Qing's master plan to conquer Ming. Under Neo-Confucianism, in theory preparing for war in peacetime was not a recommended option. In addition, in reality, it was impossible to mobilize and maintain troops in Joseon. However, Joseon public opinion at that time wanted to fight Qing until the death. Under

these circumstances, for a period after Ming's fall the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati hovered between pro-Qing and anti-Qing stances. In military reality, Joseon could not defeat Qing, and in terms of Neo-Confucian theory, Joseon could not serve Qing. Sino-centrism was rediscovered as the Neo-Confucian solution for this delicate situation. Under Sino-centrism, the military gap between Qing and Joseon was not a significant matter anymore. In terms of Neo-Confucianism, only one method recommended itself and that was to civilize Qing with a developed Neo-Confucian civilization. In military reality, Joseon was of course more Neo-Confucianized than Qing. Sino-centrism satisfied theoretical and practical aspects, and was the first Neo-Confucian solution which showed evidence of the development of Joseon Neo-Confucianism.

There is another important aspect in the the evaluation of Sino-centrism. The fact that the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati replaced Ming with Joseon as the centre of Chinese civilization did not mean that Joseon overcame Sino-centrism. It was true that the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati disregarded the consistent argument that Ming was the centre of the world. However, this was the rediscovery of Sino-centrism and not in order to overcome it. Under Neo-Confucian Sino-centrism, neither nationalism nor self-identity, Joseon Neo-Confucian literati made Joseon the last bastion of Neo-Confucianism. Sino-centrism functioned as not only a window for looking out on Qing but also a mirror to look at Joseon itself. In order to build Joseon into an ideal Neo-Confucian society, establishing deep foundations for Neo-Confucianism was necessary. Consequently, Ritual Learning (禮學) was pursued actively in the grand mission of creating an ideal Neo-Confucian society. It will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. Prosperity of Joseon Neo-Confucianism:

The Ritual Controversy

After the fall of Ming, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati believed that Joseon had become the last Neo-Confucian society in the world. They needed a proper framework to explain their new mission. Of course they needed a new tool to rebuild Joseon as the ideal Neo-Confucian society and the concept of *Li* (禮, *Ye*) could be the answer. Ritual Learning had been developed with a grand sense of mission, building an ideal Neo-Confucian society. The Ritual Controversy (禮訟論爭) occurred in this context. In brief, the Ritual Controversy in the seventeenth century concerned Queen Dowager Jaeui's (1624–1688) mourning period for her stepson King Hyojong (1619–1659/r. 1649–1659) in 1659 and his widow Queen Inseon (1618–1674) in 1674. The issue seemed very simple and insignificant. However, it had been fiercely disputed for decades among Joseon courtiers, and even the Neo-Confucian literati who were out of office participated in the Controversy. In the end the controversy became one of the most famous debates in the Joseon dynasty. The participants of the Ritual Controversy were numerous, and interpretations of it were also quite varied.

Historians have also studied the Ritual Controversy from a wide variety of interpretations for the past hundred years. A Japanese historian, Shidehara Hiroshi (幣原 但) (1907) began its study, but his research was developed under the rubric of colonial historiography. He connected the Ritual Controversy with factionalism and mainly stressed its negative effects.²⁶⁶ Other Japanese studies of this time shared this

²⁶⁶ Kim, Munjun, "Yesongyeongui Hyeonhwanggwae Hyanghuyongueui Banghyan," 40.

perspective, which only justified the Japanese annexation of Korea. After independence in 1945 Korean historians tried to overcome the existing colonialist historiography. Unfortunately, in this period they were haunted by the theory of modernity, and argued that the Controversy was antithetical to any sense of Korean modernity.²⁶⁷ However, regardless of the differences between colonial historiography and modernity theory, both of shared the premise that the Ritual Controversy was one of the main culprits for the stagnation of Joseon.

Despite this framework, in the 1980s Jeong Okja (1979) and Ji Duhwan (1987) developed more objective studies of the Controversy. Their approaches overcame the existing schematics, and were based on a more solid understanding of Ritual Learning and its political contexts. They tried to classify the participants in the Controversy and establish a link to the Four-Seven Debates as well. However, these studies made some mistakes in interpreting the original sources. In the 1990s, Yi Youngchun (1998) and Yi Bonggyu (1996, 1998) revealed the weakness of their classifications and linkages.²⁶⁸ Yi Youngchun scrutinized original texts and amended the existing errors, and Yi Bonggyu tried to locate its philosophical meaning. Although the two Yi's research contributed greatly to its interpretation, the meanings of the Ritual Controversy within the context of contemporary Joseon intellectual trends still needs to be studied.

Therefore, this chapter deals mainly with the meanings of the Ritual Controversy in the context of the ideal Neo-Confucian society. First, I trace back to the Shang dynasty (商, 1600–1046 BCE) and Chou dynasty (周, 1046–771 BCE) to find the original meaning

²⁶⁷ Haboush, "Constructing the Center," 47.

²⁶⁸ Jeong Okja, Ji Duhwan, Yi Youngchun and Yi Bonggyu's main arguments will be dealt with again later.

of *Li*. This chapter will refer to Ming and Qing's case, but is not a full-scale comparative study. In addition, I compare the changing understanding of rituals between early and seventeenth century Joseon to see how such a controversy could come about. This chapter will analyze briefly the Ritual Controversies in the seventeenth century and finally, I show the role of the Ritual Controversy in the late Joseon literati's dream, the ideal Neo-Confucian society.

4.1. The Development of Understanding of Rituals

In the first section I outline the original picture of *Li* in Shang and Chou, then I compare this with ritual practice between the Joseon royal house and the literati group in order to study the transformation of Joseon Neo-Confucian rituals. In this case study the comparison deals mainly with the primogeniture succession, since this had obviously been one of the main issues for both the royal house and literati. Their differences eventually influenced the Ritual Controversy.

Li could be translated as ritual, ritual propriety, customs, etiquette, morals, rules of proper behaviour, and so on. Of all them, 'ritual propriety' or 'rules of proper behaviour' would be acceptable. *Li* stood between morality and the law, and worked as a moral suggestion rather than as a legal force.²⁶⁹ The agnatic principle (宗法) was just one part of *Li*, which was derived from the Shang dynasty. From the beginning the agnatic principle was based on strict primogeniture succession (長子相續); the eldest son (長子) succeeded to the lineage as the lineal heir (宗子), which was called the

²⁶⁹ Jeong, Okja, "17segijeonban Yeoseoeui Seongripgwajeong," 407.

superordinate line (大宗). The other brothers excluded from the lineage were collectively called 'branch sons' (支子), forming the so-called subordinate lines (小宗). Under the Chou dynasty, a king as the heir apparent of the superordinate line could dominate other subordinate lines. One of the important things is that the agnatic principle was originally developed for a king and his succession, not for other groups, the literati or the commoners.

Primogeniture succession and agnatic principle was quite a new trend. Korea, until the Goryeo dynasty, had been based on fraternal succession. Ji Duhwan studies the process of understanding of the agnatic principle in the early Joseon, arguing that primogeniture succession was a relatively advanced concept from the point of view of Neo-Confucian legitimacy.²⁷⁰ Deuchler has developed a remarkable comparative study between Goryeo's kinship, succession, inheritance, marriage, mourning and funeral rites and those of Joseon. She argues that the most fundamental feature of the Confucianization of Joseon society was the development of the patrilineal lineage system, which was initiated by Neo-Confucians in the early Joseon dynasty.²⁷¹ In addition, Yi Youngchun scrutinizes the reality of the Neo-Confucian agnatic principle in the Joseon royal succession. Although the succession of the royal house was directly connected with a king's legitimacy, in reality primogeniture succession was rare in the Joseon dynasty. Yi points out that the various abnormal successions of the early Joseon did not become a political issue. Primogeniture succession based on Neo-Confucian legitimacy became a political issue after Gwanghaegun, and judging a king's legitimacy using the concept of primogeniture was quite a new trend in the late Joseon.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Ji, Duhwan, "Joseonjeongieui Jongbeopjedoeui Ihaegwajeong," 3.

²⁷¹ Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 283 – 285.

²⁷² Yi, Yeongchun, *Joseon Hugi Wangwigyeseung Yeongu*, 87 – 99.

This section will now examine various cases to understand the development of Joseon's Ritual Learning (禮學). However, there is a very important guideline to follow. Since Ritual Learning is one of the main issues in the Neo-Confucianism, it is easy to get lost in the boundless sources. The agnatic principle in Ritual Learning and primogeniture in the agnatic principle will be our main issue.

From the very dawn of the Joseon dynasty it was not the primogeniture succession that pre-dominated in the royal house. King Taejo discounted sons from the deceased Queen, the first wife, and chose the youngest son from the Queen, his second wife. The first Crown Prince of the Joseon dynasty was just ten years old at the time. *Sillok* clearly wrote that the younger son, *Seoja* (庶子) was chosen as the Crown Prince.²⁷³ It eventually caused the princes' fratricides, and the Crown Princeship changed to the second son from the deceased Queen.²⁷⁴ This new Crown Prince became the second King Jeongjong. Actually, King Jeongjong's elder brother, the first son from the deceased Queen, Yi Bangu, had already died in 1393. Therefore King Jeongjong could be seen as the second eldest son (次長子), and it can be said that Joseon's first succession was primogenitural. However, the late Yi Bangu, who was the first son of King Taejo and the elder brother of King Jeongjong, died leaving behind him his son Yi Bokgeun. He was the legitimate grandson (嫡孫). According to primogeniture succession based on Neo-Confucianism, Yi Bokgeun apparently had a priority to the throne. According to the fraternal succession, however, King Jeongjong as the eldest of brothers could be enthroned. In one word, although King Taejo's first son had already died, the legitimate grandson Yi Bokgeun could be proof that the first succession of

²⁷³ *Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 8. 20. 1.

²⁷⁴ *Taejo Sillok*, 1398. 8. 26. 1.

Joseon Royal house was based on the fraternal succession. Furthermore, the next succession was fraternal succession. Joseon's third king Taejong was a younger brother of the second king Jeongjong. Joseon's first two consecutive successions were fraternal successions.

King Taejong tried to confirm the primogeniture succession although he was enthroned according to fraternal succession. King Taejong installed his first legitimate son as the Crown Prince based on primogeniture succession.²⁷⁵ During the reign of King Taejong, the Joseon literati group also tried to institutionalize primogeniture succession. A memorial that only the first son can perform the ancestral service was sent to the king. However, at the last moment of his reign King Taejong nullified the memorial²⁷⁶. He seemed to want to change his Crown Prince. Before long, King Taejong finally changed his Crown Prince from the first son to the third son, who was the fourth King Sejong.²⁷⁷ In theory and in reality primogeniture could not yet be settled on in Joseon's royal house.

During the same period there was no interesting episode related to either primogeniture or fraternal succession in the literati group either. There must have been various cases related to inheritance and ancestral service among the literati, but it did not become a social issue. It meant that fraternal or primogeniture succession was just an issue within a family. In other words, the Ritual Learning or the agnatic principle – and even primogeniture succession – could not work as a social law or a moral suggestion theoretically and practically yet.

²⁷⁵ *Taejong Sillok*, 1405. 4. 8. 1.

²⁷⁶ *Taejong Sillok*, 1417. 1. 12. 3.

²⁷⁷ *Taejong Sillok*, 1418. 6. 5. 1.

The theoretical preparation for the primogeniture succession was established during the reign of King Sejong. The first ritual establishment was based on the generational gradation of ancestral service dealing with ancestors' spirit tablets (神主). Joseon officially began to make theoretical preparations for Neo-Confucian ritual practices from this time onwards.²⁷⁸ In addition, the separation of superordinate (大宗) and subordinate descent lines (小宗) was finally confirmed.²⁷⁹ King Sejong appointed his first son as the Crown Prince, and the Crown Prince succeeded to the throne without any difficulty. King Sejong's theoretical preparation for primogeniture succession was realized, which was the first case of primogeniture succession in the Joseon royal house. The reign of King Sejong could be called the first true appearance of primogeniture succession both practically and theoretically.

Among the Joseon literati group, however, the theoretical preparation for primogeniture succession immediately met various complex real cases. One of the most famous cases was whether the son of a concubine (妾子) could succeed or whether the established heir (立後) did when the lineal heir (宗子) died without leaving a legitimate son (嫡子). According to the Chinese Ritual book *Hun Li* (婚義, Rituals of Marriages), a high court official (卿大夫) could have one primary wife (一妻) and two concubines (二妾) in order to assure for himself the birth of an appropriate heir. It seemed that a concubine's son (妾子) could become his father's legitimate heir without any discrimination in China. An officer of Rites, however, memorialized that Joseon's custom was different from that of China. Apart from a concubine from a lower class (踐妾), the case of a concubine from commoners (良妾) was still complex. Some commoners were little

²⁷⁸ *Sejong Sillok*, 1428. 9. 14. 4.

²⁷⁹ *Sejong Sillok*, 1429. 4. 22. 3.

better than lower class, and all commoners were not the same. There had to be a distinction between a primary wife and a concubine regardless of her origin. An officer of Rites also added that it was rare that a concubine's son managed his ritual duties well. King Sejong ordered a re-investigation and later report.²⁸⁰ It meant that *Seoja* (庶子) was only understood as a concubine's son (妾子) in Joseon, while it could be understood as *Jungja* (衆子, other sons except the first legitimate son) without any discrimination in China. A succession by *Seoja* or an adopted son was one of the first issues in the early Joseon. The problem of interpretation of *Seoja* and *Jungja* also became one of the main issues in the later Ritual Controversy.

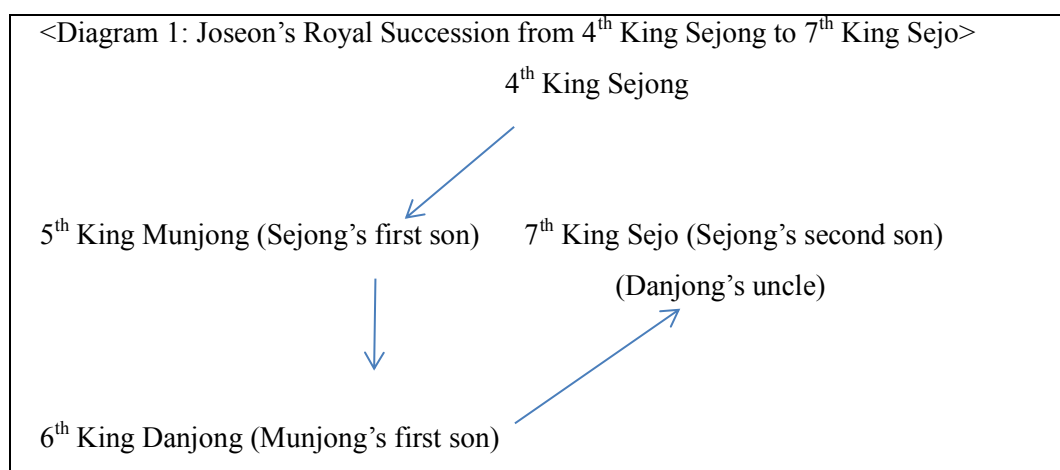
A succession by *Seoja* was not illegal, but an adoption was mainly proposed as the second best plan in 1437. The Council of State memorialized on the principle of lineal succession, which was its first formulation in the Joseon dynasty. When the lineal heir had no legitimate son, he could adopt a son from his brother's sons or near relatives. In this case only a branch son (支子) could be adopted since the first son (嫡長子) of his brothers or relatives should succeed his own father's lineage. In addition, the adoption was subject to the approval of both sides. The adopted son should serve his adopted father as a real father and mourn for him observing the heaviest mourning period (斬衰服), and for his real father, a one-year mourning period (期年服).²⁸¹ Although it showed their preference of an adopted son over a concubine's son, it was a more advanced understanding of the agnatic principle. It also dealt with a 'not wearing a three-year untrimmed mourning twice' (不貳斬) principle. This principle became one of main issues around the Ritual Controversy as well. During the reign of King Sejong, Joseon's

²⁸⁰ *Sejong Sillok*, 1434. 4. 16. 2.

²⁸¹ *Sejong Sillok*, 1437. 6. 3. 1.

understandings of the agnatic principle, especially primogeniture succession, were developed and the practice was also followed. King Sejong's son, the fifth King Munjong died after just two years. King Munjong's first son, the sixth King Danjong succeeded to the throne. These two consecutive successions in the royal house were primogeniture successions.

King Sejo's usurpation, however, moved back the existing primogeniture succession theoretically and practically. King Sejong's second son, King Munjong's younger brother and King Danjong's uncle, Prince Suyang (King Sejo) usurped the throne from his nephew King Danjong (see Diagram 1).



Under these circumstances Jo Malsaeng's case became an issue. Jo Malsaeng (1370–1447) stated in his will that his heir should be his third son (衆子) not his legitimate first grandson (嫡孫), who was a cripple. It broke the primogeniture succession principle but it was not an issue at that time. After eleven years Jo's lineal grandson sued against his uncle, Jo's third son.²⁸² Inevitably Jo's case became one of the main issues at court. The officials of the Rites department memorialized that even if the lineal heir (the legitimate

²⁸² *Sejo Sillok*, 1458. 8. 26. 4.

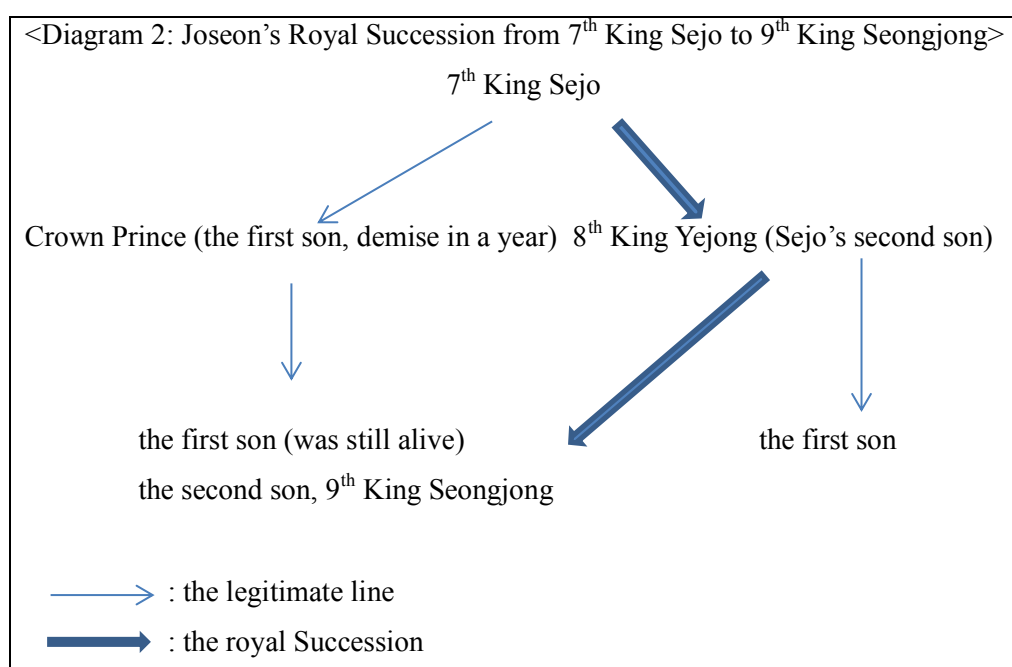
first grandson) was unable to perform ancestral service, a younger brother (次子) was not entitled to establish a separate shrine. In spite of Jo's will, it should follow primogeniture succession based on the agnatic principle. The Minister of the Right, however, opposed the memorial from the Department of Rites. The Minister of the Right said that a father's will had a dominant position over the Neo-Confucian agnatic principle. It was natural that King Sejo also favoured the flexible approach and endorsed the third son as the rightful heir.²⁸³ This was exactly the same as the fact that King Sejo, the second son, did so against the lineal grandson, King Danjong. The third son won against the lineal grandson.

After the first issue between a concubine's son and an adopted son, Jo's case between other sons (衆子) and the legitimate first grandson (嫡孫) was the second issue of the Joseon dynasty. Interestingly, Jo's case was exactly the same as King Sejo's case. King Sejo's usurpation was the struggle between the legitimate first grandson (King Danjong) and other sons (King Sejo). The royal house already demonstrated the answer for Jo's case through King Sejo's usurpation. The Sejo court's decision on Jo's case could clearly present the backwardness of primogeniture succession both in the royal house and the literati group.

The regression of primogeniture succession in the royal house reached its peak at the succession of King Seongjong (1469–1494). King Sejo's first son was installed as the Crown Prince but died within a year. Although King Sejo's first son, the Crown Prince, left legitimate sons, King Sejo's second son succeeded to the throne, which was King Yejong (1468–1469). However, King Yejong also died suddenly, within thirteen months.

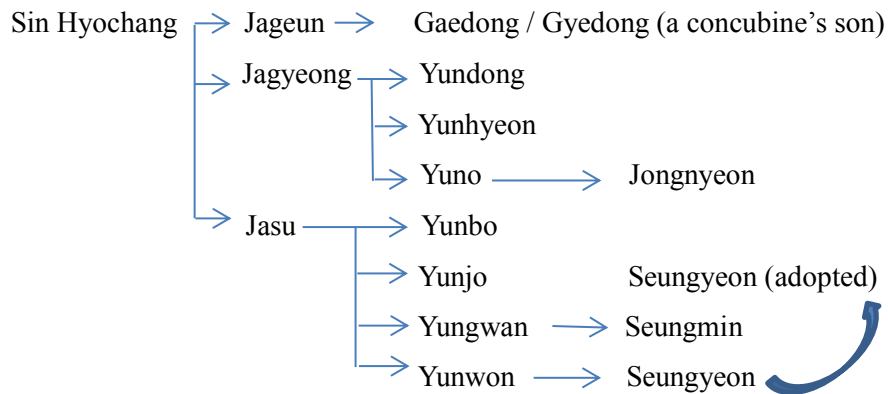
²⁸³ *Sejo Sillok*, 1458. 8. 26. 4.

King Yejong also left a legitimate son but one of his nephews succeeded to the throne, which was King Seongjong. King Seongjong was the second son of King Sejo's first son. Primogeniture succession had completely disappeared in the royal house. The position of the lineal grandson (嫡孫) was lower than that of other sons (衆子). As other sons, King Sejo and King Yejong both succeeded to the throne although his brother left a legitimate son (嫡孫) (see below Diagram 2). A fraternal succession was classed above a primogeniture succession in the royal house. As the second grandson King Seongjong was enthroned although the first grandson, King Seongjong's elder brother, was still alive. The situation among the literati group was not any better than that.



The case of Sin Hyochang's occurred in the Neo-Confucian literati during the reign of King Seongjong. Sin's case was very delicate and had been reopened four times, in 1452, 1470, 1479 and 1483. The Joseon court's decisions were rather inconsistent but showed clearly the development of an understanding of the agnatic principle at the time. It would be better to sketch the family tree of Sin Hyochang (see below Diagram 3).

<Diagram 3: Sin Hyochang's Family Tree (an abridged account)>



Sin Hyochang died in 1440 and stated in his will to his eldest son Jageun: “Your wife is over fifty years old and has no son yet. If you get married again and still have no son, you can choose one of my grandsons as an heir.” After a while, Sin Jageun begot a son from his concubine, which was Gaedong. Sin Jageun left a will stating that Gaedong was a concubine’s son and still young so he let Yungwan, one of his nephews, perform the ancestral service. The Council of State and the Department of Rites answered that Gaedong should perform the ancestral service although he was a concubine’s son and young.²⁸⁴ It was a reasonable decision based on the agnatic principle. One of the important things is that this initial decision was made in the reign of King Danjong and before King Sejo’s usurpation.

However, in 1470 a ridiculous event occurred, and the more ridiculous thing was the Seongjong court’s decision on that event. Sin Yungwan’s son, Seungmin, stole Sin Gyedong’s house and tried to deprive Sin Hyochang’s of his spirit tablet, but failed. Sin Gaedong sued against Sin Seungmin, but King Seongjong ordered Sin Seungmin to

²⁸⁴ *Danjong Sillok*, 1452. 9. 28. 3.

perform Sin Hyochang's service, and Sin Gyedong, only Sin Jageun's one.²⁸⁵ It meant that Sin Jageun, the eldest son of Sin Hyochang, was excluded from the lineage. In addition, the Seongjong court's decision was completely the opposite of the Danjong court's initial decision. It clearly showed the backward understanding of the agnatic principle at that time. Sin Seungmin's performance of ancestral service became a delicate issue at the court.

Sin Seungmin's case was reopened in 1479. Seongjong's court discussed Sin's case over and over and found several new things. First, Sin Hyochang chose Yundong as his heir before Gyedong was born, but Yundong died soon after. Sin Hyochang's first son, Jageun, left no legitimate son except for Gaedong, from a concubine. Sin Hyochang's second son, Jagyeong, left three legitimate sons, Yundong, Yunhyeon and Yuno. But the first two sons, Yundong and Yunhyeon, left no legitimate sons. Only Yuno left one legitimate son, who was Jongnyeon. According to filial rank Jongnyeon is the legitimate line, and Seongjong's courtiers strongly supported him as well. However, King Seongjong could not dare invalidate the status of Yungwan who was appointed as the lineal grandson. According to Sin Hyochang's will, Jageun could choose the legitimate heir among his nephews. In the end they could not make any decision at the time,²⁸⁶ but it showed an important changing mood. Until that time they seriously considered that the lineal heir would proceed as in Jo Malsaeng's case, but now they tried to find a proper candidate according to the Neo-Confucian agnatic principle.

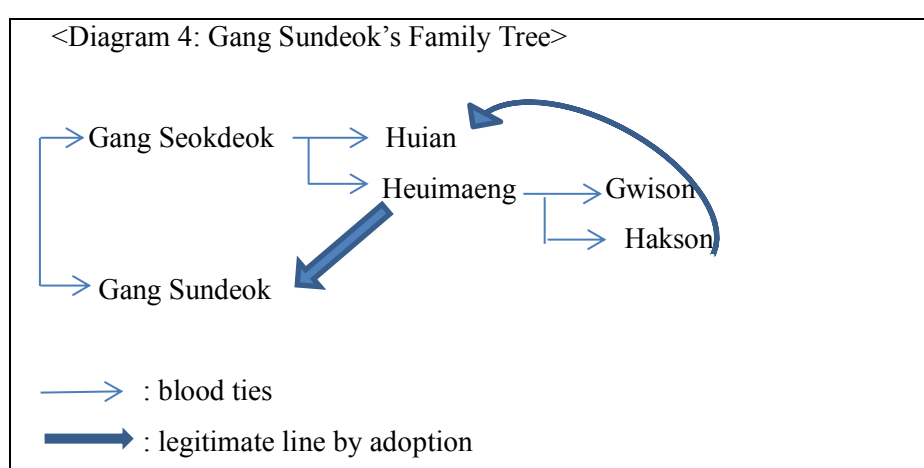
There was another development in the understanding of the agnatic principle in the decision of 1483. Sin Hyochang's third son Sin Jasu's second son Yunjeo adopted his

²⁸⁵ *Seongjong Sillok*, 1470. 6. 24. 3.

²⁸⁶ *Seongjong Sillok*, 1479. 8. 11. 1 / 21. 4 / 22. 5.

nephew Seungyeon as his heir. Sin Jasu's third son, Yungwan's son Seungmin, claimed that the document establishing his cousin as the lineal heir was falsified. It turned out that the document was falsified, but Yunjeo's wife confirmed that Seungyeon's adoption was his deceased husband's will. In the end the adopted son Seungyeon's status was verified as the lineal heir.²⁸⁷ An adoption issue was again verified in practice, which just recovered the understanding of King Sejong's time. In the end Sin Hyochang's case mixed a lineal heir's will, a son from a concubine, an adopted son and the agnatic principle.

The issue of an adoption became a fresh topic among the literati group after the dilemma between the legitimate grandson and other sons arose. The first issue was between a concubine's son and an adopted son, but now became one between an adopted son and his nephew. Then another delicate case of an adoption in the reign of King Seongjong occurred (see below Diagram 4).



Gang Sundeok did not have any son, so he adopted his nephew, Heuimaeng, with his brother Seokdeok's permission. After a long while Seokdeok's first son Huian died

²⁸⁷ *Seongjong Sillok*, 1483. 1. 4. 8.

without leaving any legitimate son. It meant that the superordinate line (大宗) was discontinued. So the issue was whether the adopted son, Huimaeng, should come back to succeed through the superordinate line or not. In the end Huimaeng held his status as an adopted son for Sundeok, and Heuimaeng's second son, Hakson was adopted to succeed through the superordinate line²⁸⁸ (see below Diagram 5).

<Diagram 5. Gang's Family Tree after Adoption>

→ Gang Seokdeok → Huian → Hakson (an adopted son)

→ Gang Sundeok → Huimaeng (an adopted son) → Gwison

Seongjong's court verified the adoption, but the establishment of the adopted son was often regarded as only a temporary safety measure. As soon as a real son was born, the adopted son was terminated or degraded to the second son (次子). A concubine's son also got priority over the adopted son.²⁸⁹ Although it was natural to have paternal love for his real son more than his adopted son, the confrontation between a real son and an adopted son already showed the development of an understanding of the agnatic principle.

King Seongjong's first son, Yeonsangun, however, nullified the understanding of the agnatic principle again. It is needless to say that this was an example of the lunacy of Yeonsangun's age. Yeonsangun's half-brother King Jungjong ascended to the throne through a restoration. Until the tenth year of King Jungjong's reign, one could hardly discuss the agnatic principle again. The existing understanding of the agnatic principle

²⁸⁸ *Seongjong Sillok*, 1476. 6. 1. 2.

²⁸⁹ *Seongjong Sillok*, 1488. 1. 24. 2.

had already been nullified.²⁹⁰ Jungjong's courtiers wanted to rebuild the agnatic principle theoretically and practically, however, they did not have a comprehensive knowledge of the agnatic principle, even of Zhu Xi's *Jia Li* (朱子家禮). Jo Gwangjo argued that it would be better to start to follow the agnatic principle using the royal house as a model.²⁹¹

There was a delicate issue in the Joseon royal house. Prince Musan's first son, prince Yeongseon, died and left no son. Musan's second son, Prince Yeongcheon, asked his mother to recommend him as the lineal heir. Prince Yeongcheon's mother and Prince Musan's wife requested the approval of Prince Yeongcheon's succession referring to many other cases of the second son's succession (see below Diagram 6.1). The Department of Rites agreed with their request since the *Great Code* (經國大典) approved the second son's succession. An officer of the Censor General, however, disagreed with her request and even asked to amend the *Great Code* as well. The *Great Code* stated that the most senior agnatic descendant as the lineal heir was in charge of ancestral services. This seems to have continued the Goryeo tradition of fraternal succession.²⁹² However, King Jungjong just wanted to follow the opinion of the Department of Rites as well as the *Great Code*, and approved Prince Musan's wife's request.²⁹³ If so, the first son's spirit tablet should be removed from the shrine (祠堂) and his property should be transferred to his second brother. It meant that the superordinate line was disconnected and the subordinate line was respected.

²⁹⁰ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1516. 12. 3. 1.

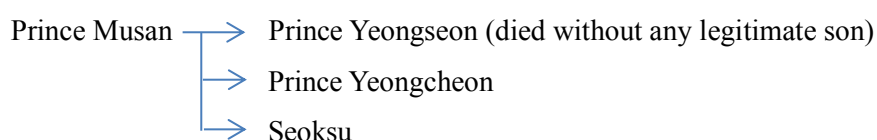
²⁹¹ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1519. 7. 17. 2.

²⁹² Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 142.

²⁹³ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1540. 3. 4. 1.

After King Jungjong's first decision on Prince Musan's case he died. King Jungjong's first legitimate son succeeded to throne, which was King Injong. Unfortunately, King Injong died within a year and left no son. King Injong's brother as the second eldest legitimate son of King Jungjong ascended to the throne, which was King Myeongjong. When the first legitimate son died without any legitimate heir, the second legitimate one succeeded. This succession was not decided on primogeniture based on the agnatic principle. However, the superordinate line, King Jungjong's first legitimate son, that is King Injong's line, was disconnected and the subordinate line, King Jungjong's second legitimate son King Myeongjong's line, was respected. Furthermore, there was another ember burning: if the first legitimate son's wife adopted a nephew, who is the legitimate heir?

<Diagram 6-1: Prince Musan's Family Tree>

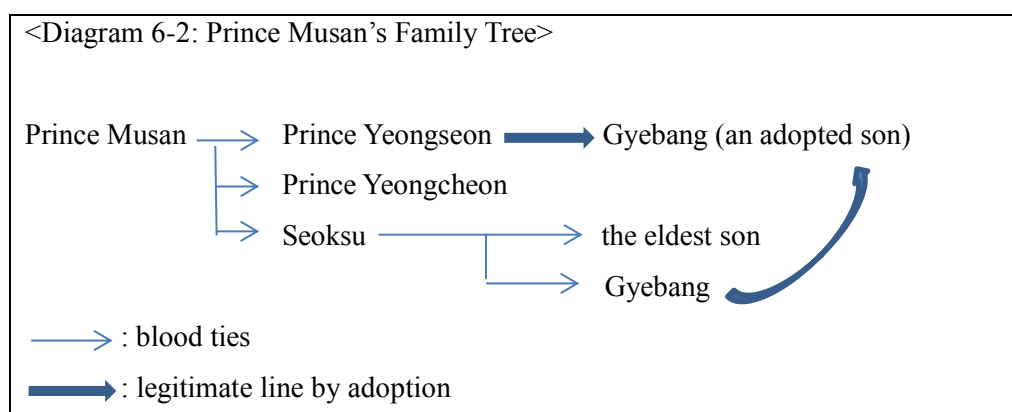


Not before long the ember started to light. The first son, Prince Yeongseon, his wife adopted a nephew, Musan's third son's second son, Gyeongbang (see Diagram 6.2). Prince Yeongseon's wife wanted to take back the right of the lineal heir for her adopted son, Gyeongbang.²⁹⁴ After long and intensive discussions, the adopted son's claim was accepted.²⁹⁵ If Prince Yeongseon adopted a son while he was alive, it might be simple. However, Prince Yeongseon's wife adopted a son after Prince Yeongseon died. It was a different situation. Therefore, Myeongjong's court limited it to the fact that an adoption

²⁹⁴ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1551. 7. 28. 3.

²⁹⁵ *Myeongjong Sillok*, 1551. 8. 1. 2

should be made before the lineal heir died. It meant that the status of the adopted son was higher than his uncle if he was adopted before the lineal heir died.



Another practical issue left was the status of the adopted son: if a lineal heir begot a son from his wife or concubine after he adopted a son, who had priority? The Jungjong court made a decision that a lineal heir cannot disconnect the relations with his adopted son.²⁹⁶ King Myeongjong also confirmed that it was illegal to disconnect the relations with the adopted son after his real son's birth.²⁹⁷ The theoretical and practical understanding of primogeniture succession based on the agnatic principle was developed in both the royal house and the literati group.

The next four consecutive successions in the royal house, however, were not primogeniture successions. King Seonjo was the third son of King Jungjong's seventh son from a concubine (庶孫), and Gwanghaegun was second son of King Seonjo's concubine (次庶子). King Injo, who ascended by a restoration, was also the first son of Seonjo's fifth son from a concubine (庶孫). King Hyojong was the second son of King Injo although King Injo's first son, the Prince Sohyeon left his legitimate sons.

²⁹⁶ *Jungjong Sillok*, 1524. 1. 9. 1.

²⁹⁷ *Seonjo Sillok*, 1581. 2. 6. 3.

Unlike the royal house, around the reign of King Seonjo the understanding of the agnatic principle –and especially primogeniture succession – began to settle down among the Joseon literati group. As the agnatic consciousness deepened, the attainment of knowledge about the correct ritual practice became a central for the literati. However, it had to wait until the seventeenth century for the development of Ritual Learning on a substantial scale. Although Zhu Xi's *Chia Li* was the main text for the Ritual Learning, it still needed to be annotated and supplemented. In 1518 the *Chia Li Yi Jie* (家禮儀節, Ceremonial Usage of the *Chia Li*), which was praised as 'wings of *Chia Li*' by Qiu Jun (邱濬, 1420–1495) was introduced. The *Chia Li Yi Jie* was recommended for printing but it did not appear before 1626. The long duration, nearly a hundred years, between the introduction of *Chia Li Yi Jie* to Joseon and its actual printing and distribution showed that the Ritual Learning was neither necessary nor popular until the early seventeenth century.

Joseon intellectuals' works also began to be published from the early seventeenth century. Jeong Okja has studied Joseon's ritual books and has made a list of them. By Jeong's study, only Yi Hwang and Yi I left several books on rituals before the seventeenth century. One of the prominent ritual scholars, Kim Jangsaeng (金長生, 1548–1631), began to write ritual books, such as *Garye Jipram* (家禮輯覽, Collected Commentaries to the *Chia Li*) and *Euirye Munhae* (疑禮問解, Questions and Answers on Doubtful Passages of the Rites) in the seventeenth century. In particular *Euirye Munhae* dealt with the considerable disparity between Chinese prescriptions and Joseon's adaptations. In theory it meant that the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati began to understand rituals independently. In practice, at the same time, they began to follow a different track from the royal house. Choe Myeonggil wanted to have his adopted son

recognized as the lineal heir, even though he later begat his real son from his wife. The *Great Code* was finally amended during the reign of King Injo to state that if a son was born after the official adoption, his real son was to be ranked as the second son. Joseon Neo-Confucian literati finally accomplished an understanding of the agnatic principle, especially primogeniture succession, theoretically and practically.²⁹⁸

The Neo-Confucian literati's accomplishment of Ritual Learning around the seventeenth century was significant. First, the comprehensive theoretical pursuit of Ritual Learning was a new trend. Until the sixteenth century, each time a case occurred, a debate on it emerged. From time to time, and as the practical need arose, a theoretical explanation followed it. However, after Kim Jangsaeng's study of Ritual Learning, the existing discussions of the agnatic principle were held on a comprehensive level without any practical issue. Kim Jangsaeng's first need to study Ritual Learning was due to his personal case, his father's funeral ceremony. However, in a generation the theory of Ritual Learning became a new trend among the Neo-Confucian literati.

Second, this new trend, the comprehensive study of Ritual Learning, was developed within the international and domestic political contexts of the period. The turbulent circumstances around the Ming-Qing transition affected Joseon heavily. The Neo-Confucian literati responded with Sino-centrism, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but Sino-centrism was limited to the diplomatic and political field. The Neo-Confucian literati wanted to find a clearer and immutable principle to explain their turbulent age. *Li* was not just ritual propriety, customs or etiquette anymore, but could be a legal force beyond mere moral suggestion. The seventeenth century Neo-Confucian literati tried to

²⁹⁸ Jeong, Okja, "17segijeonban Yeoseoeui Seongripgwajeong," 418-420.

find an immutable certainty in *Li* through Ritual Learning. At that moment the four consecutive successions after King Seonjo were not according to primogeniture succession. What was more, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Gwanghaegun could not get Ming's approval for sixteen years. The Neo-Confucian literati learned from the delay that a king's illegitimate succession could be a weakness for kingship. The Injo Restoration and Crown Prince Sohyeon's sudden death can be seen to other causes behind the development of Ritual Learning's comprehensiveness. Although the Crown Prince Sohyeon's sons were alive, his younger brother, Prince Bongrim, was enthroned as King Hyojong. The Ritual Controversy concerned King Hyojong and his wife Queen Inseon's demise.

In conclusion, Neo-Confucian ritual practice, especially concerning primogeniture succession, transformed slowly throughout the early Joseon. Until the sixteenth century, there was no substantial gap between the royal house and the literati in terms of ritual practice. However, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati accomplished their theoretical understanding of Ritual Learning and their theoretical preparation directly influenced their practice in the seventeenth century. On the other hand, Joseon's royal house had been populated with illegitimate successors. This gap created the Ritual Controversy in the mid-seventeenth century.

4.2. Ritual Controversy in 1659 (己亥禮訟) and 1674 (甲寅禮訟)

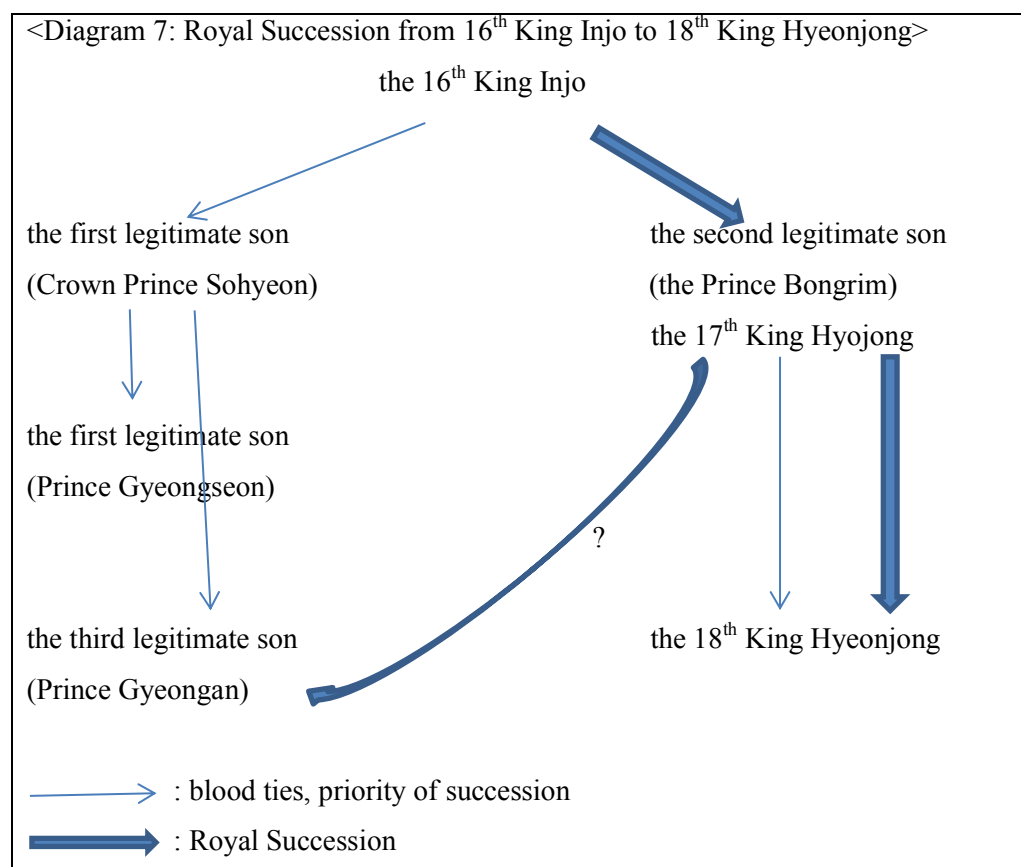
From the seventeenth century onwards, the Joseon literati group understood primogeniture succession based on the agnatic principle in theory and also followed it in practice. However, the Joseon royal house's successions were not based on primogeniture. This gap caused the Ritual Controversy. First, this section briefly sketches the circumstances around Queen Dowager Jaeui's mourning period for King Hyojong in 1659 and his widow Queen Inseon in 1674. The following section will compare the main arguments of three key figures, Song Siyeol (宋時烈, 1607–1689), Heo Mok (許穆, 1595–1682) and Yun Hun (尹鑄, 1617–1680) respectively.



<Picture 8: *Yeongreung* (寧陵), King Hyjong and Queen Inseon's Royal Tomb, Yeoju>

First, the peculiar situations in the Royal house at that time should be examined (see

Diagram 7). King Injo's first son, Crown Prince Sohyeon, died before his enthronement, but he left three legitimate sons. According to primogeniture succession, Crown Prince Sohyeon's first son, Prince Gyeongseon, should be enthroned. However, Crown Prince Sohyeon's younger brother, Prince Bongrim (King Hyojong) was enthroned. The more complex situation, however, related to two other figures. The first was Crown Prince Sohyeon's third son, Prince Gyeongang (1644–1665). Prince Gyeongang was still alive when King Hyojong died in 1659. Prince Gyeongang always had the possibility to become king. Therefore, his presence provoked a furious debate over King Heonjong's legitimacy.



The second figure was Queen Dowager Jaeui (1624–1688). King Injo's first queen died in 1635, and the second wife became Queen Dowager Jaeui. When King Injo married her he was forty-four years old and Queen Dowager Jaeui, just fifteen. It was King

Injo's second marriage. King Injo's second son, King Hyojong, was five years older than his stepmother, Queen Dowager Jaeui. King Hyojong's wife, Queen Inseon, was also six years older than Queen Dowager Jaeui. If Queen Dowager Jaeui died earlier than King Hyojong and his wife, Queen Inseon, the Ritual Controversy would not have been necessary from the beginning. These peculiar situations in the royal house, Prince Gyeongang's and Queen Dowager Jaeui's presence and the Neo-Confucian literati's new and comprehensive understanding of Ritual Learning coalesced in the Ritual Controversy.

The Ritual Controversy in 1659 could be roughly divided into three phases. The first was rather straightforward, which was just for two days after King Hyojong's death. The main figures of the first phases were Yun Hyu and Song Siyeol. As soon as King Hyojong died, many literati voiced various opinions concerning Queen Dowager Jaeui's mourning period for King Hyojong. Yun Hyu first argued that a three-year period in untrimmed mourning (斬衰服) would be appropriate. Yun's main point was that rituals for the royal house should be different from that for an ordinary family (王者士庶不同禮). When Prime Minister (領議政) Jeong Taehwa (鄭太和, 1602–1673) heard of Yun's opinion, Jeong consulted Song Siyeol about it. Song refuted Yun's opinion with his own interpretation of *Yi Li* (儀禮, Ceremonials and Rites), and then explained it referencing four exceptional cases (四種說) in a commentary on *Yi Li*. Song finally argued that King Hyojong was merely the second son of King Injo, thus Queen Dowager Jaeui should observe a one-year mourning period (墓年服) for the second son, King Hyojong. Jeong was shocked and stopped Song's comment since King Injo's third legitimate grandson, Prince Gyeongang, was still alive at that time. The interpretation of Song's statement could mean that King Injo's third grandson, Prince Gyeongang, had a priority

to the throne over King Hyojong's son, King Hyeonjong. Therefore, Jeong proposed the second best plan that a one-year mourning period was appropriate since the *Great Code* specified it as a mother's mourning for all sons. Song agreed and added that the *Da Ming Lu* (大明律) also specified the same. A meeting of the present and past senior ministers of the State Council cited the *Great Code* and the *Da Ming Lu*, and proposed that a one-year mourning period would be appropriate. King Hyeonjong also approved it.²⁹⁹ The first round of the Ritual Controversy in 1659 came to the end like this. Although there were still expressions of discontent with Song's interpretation, no one publicly opposed a one-year mourning period for a while.

It was Heo Mok who opened the second phases of the Ritual Controversy in 1659, almost one year later. This started from a confrontation between Heo Mok and Song Jungil (宋浚吉, 1606–1672) and then Song Siyeol again backed up Song Jungil. Just a few weeks before Queen Dowager Jaui's mourning period was to come to an end, Heo memorialized pointing out the impropriety of Queen Dowager Jaui's one-year mourning for King Hyojong. Heo argued that King Hyojong was originally the second son but became the second eldest son (次長子) inheriting the legitimacy of the throne. Therefore, Queen Dowager Jaui should observe a three-year period in trimmed mourning (齋衰服) for her eldest son King Hyojong. If Queen Dowager Jaui's one-year mourning came to an end, no one can fix it later. King Hyeonjong ordered the reinvestigation of the matter of her mourning period.³⁰⁰ Heo Mok's three-year trimmed mourning and Yun Hyu's three-year untrimmed mourning seemed to be similar. Their length is the same but their theoretical backgrounds were much different from each

²⁹⁹ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1659. 5. 5. 3

Hyeonjong Gaesu Sillok, 1659. 5. 5. 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5.

³⁰⁰ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 3. 16. 3.

other, which will be compared and discussed in the next section.

After a few days Song Jungil countered Heo's memorial. Song said that the Joseon royal family had never observed a three-year mourning period for a son. He added that the second son could be the second eldest son only when the original eldest son died very young leaving no heir of his own. Song asked in reply. "By Heo's interpretation, would the parents have to observe a three-year mourning period for the third son if the second son were to die, for the fourth son if the third son were to die, and so on? King Hyojong could not be the second eldest son since the original eldest son the Crown Prince Sohyeon had left his sons."³⁰¹ Then Song tackled Yun Hyu's opinion that the succession of the royal house was different from that of an ordinary family and the individual who succeeded to the throne should be regarded as the legitimate heir, thus a three-year mourning period should be observed for him. Song asked again, should a three-year mourning period be observed when a brother or a nephew succeeded the throne? Song proposed that King Hyeonjong send historians (史官) to consult the *Sillok* to find similar cases, and the King sent historians to investigate them.³⁰²

Historians came back and reported as follows. A few similar cases were found, but no specific record of the mourning period was referenced in the *Sillok*. King Yejong, the second son of King Sejo, was appointed as the Crown Prince and ascended to the throne after the original Crown Prince, King Sejo's first son, died. However, there was no specific record of his mother Queen Jeongheui's mourning period for his first son. When King Injong, the first son of King Jungjong, died, his stepmother Queen Munjeong observed her mourning period but little was written of her mourning period

³⁰¹ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 3. 21. 1.

³⁰² *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 3. 21. 1.

in the *Sillok*. It only described that Queen Jeongheui and Queen Munjeong had observed in accordance with precedent.³⁰³ This meant that the mourning period or Ritual Learning was not a political issue before the seventeenth century. No one cared about whether the mourning period should be one year or three years.

In fact, just a few days before Joseon historians reported the cases of Queen Jeongheui and Queen Munjeong, Heo Mok again memorialized in order to answer Song Jungil's refutation. Heo argued that the reason to observe a three-year mourning period for the eldest son was not because he was the eldest of the sons, but because he succeeded his grandfather and father. King Hyojong was originally the second son but succeeded to the throne so Queen Dowager Jaeui should wear a three-year trimmed mourning for him. A historian of the *Sillok* added his comment that many courtiers thought Heo's argument was an unchallengeable statement but no one defended Heo for fear of conflicting with public opinion and the mood of the court.³⁰⁴ The Councilor of the Left (左議政) Sim Jiwon (沈之源, 1593–1662) and the Councilor of the Right (右議政) Won Dupyo (元斗杓, 1593–1664), who had argued for a one-year mourning period in 1659, submitted their resignations, but King Hyeonjong rejected them.³⁰⁵ On the same day, when Joseon historians reported similar cases, Jeong Taehwa, Sim Jiwon, Won Dupyo and even Song Jungil admitted that they had made a mistake since they were not experts on the Ritual Learning.³⁰⁶

Song Siyeol, however, maintained firmly his own argument and went further. Song argued that Heo's argument would violate the principles of 'no two right lines' (無二統)

³⁰³ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 16. 4.

³⁰⁴ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 10. 1.

³⁰⁵ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 13. 1.

³⁰⁶ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 16. 4.

and ‘not wearing a three-year untrimmed mourning twice’ (不貳斬). It meant that the original first son, Crown Prince Sohyeon, was the undeniable first line, and King Hyojong could not be the first line by any means. It could be argued that Crown Prince Sohyeon’s line was still the eldest line and King Hyojong’s line remained as just the second line. It was a very dangerous comment since Prince Gyeonghan was still alive. Song also argued against Yun’s suggestion that all successors to the throne should be accorded a three-year untrimmed mourning period. Song asked, “If one follows this case, would it be extended to a successor who was a concubine’s son like Gwanghaegun?”³⁰⁷ It meant that Song wanted to apply the agnatic principle from a king to commoners on the same ground. In fact, the agnatic principle was originally introduced for the royal succession, not for the literati or the commoners, as mentioned previously. However, by now the usual characteristics of royal succession were being ignored. Song’s argument was still vulnerable to the misunderstanding that King Hyojong’s line was not the legitimate one.

The third phased was opened by Yun Seondo’s (尹善道, 1587–1671) aggressive memorial. Song Siyeol’s public challenge against King Hyojong’s legitimacy finally gave concerns regarding Yun Seondo’s memorial. This was a terrible threat to those two Songs, Song Siyeol and Song Jungil. In the end, they had to flee Hanyang immediately. Yun’s memorial finally transformed the Ritual Controversy from an academic debate into sharp political strife. Yun retorted, “By Song Siyeol’s logic, the second son obtained his father’s decree, received the Mandate of Heaven and performed the ancestral sacrifices, but the legitimacy would lay with someone else. Is it reasonable? If

³⁰⁷ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 16. 4.

so, is he a false heir apparent (假世子) or a regent (攝皇帝)?”³⁰⁸ The Ritual Controversy was not just the matter of Queen Dowager Jaeui’s mourning period anymore, but a challenge to King Hyojong’s legitimacy itself. Yun touched on the most vulnerable aspect of the two Songs’ opinion.³⁰⁹ Fortunately for the two Songs, a Royal Secretary Kim Suhang (金壽恒, 1629–1689) intercepted Yun’s memorial and criticized it before King Hyeonjong.³¹⁰ After a few days King Hyeonjong finally ordered to be burned Yun’s memorial.³¹¹ There was no disputant on the stage anymore. The two Songs fled Hanyang, Yun was banished and his memorial was burned. It seemed that the Ritual Controversy would end like this.

Yun’s memorial, however, was still a vital issue in Hyeonjong’s court. Yun’s memorial was referred to around thirty times over the next two months. In other words, Hyeonjong’s court dealt with Yun’s memorial every other day. Gwon Si (權認, 1604–1672) stood on Yun’s side.³¹² The Councilor of Right Won Dupyo changed his mind and moved on Yun’s side as well.³¹³ Yun Hyu wrote a letter to Heo Mok to stress his three-year mourning opinion again.³¹⁴ The situation was urgent since Queen Dowager Jaeui’s one-year mourning period was coming to an end. King Hyeonjong called courtiers to discuss Queen Dowager Jaeui’s mourning period again, and Yun Hyu was there. However, Yun did not strongly argue his opinion before the King. A historian of the *Sillok* added his opinion regarding Yun’s cowardice. At the end King Hyeonjong made a decision to observe one-year mourning period since the *Great Code* specified it as a

³⁰⁸ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 18. 1.

³⁰⁹ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 19. 1 / 2 / 3.

³¹⁰ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 18. 1.

³¹¹ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 24. 6.

³¹² *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 24. 4.

³¹³ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 5. 1. 5.

³¹⁴ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 5. 1. 6

mother's mourning for all sons and there was no record of a three-year mourning period for a son in the *Sillok*.³¹⁵ The Ritual Controversy in 1659 was patched up like this, but still open to dispute.

The following year Jo Gyeong (趙綱, 1586–1669) memorialized to defend Yun Seondo³¹⁶ and then crowds of memorials against Jo Gyeong were sent to the throne. Yun's memorial had been burned one year before, but it was still alive in Hyeonjong's court, and participants in the Ritual Controversy gradually increased. Finally, a thousand private Neo-Confucian literati from Gyeongsang province sent a joint memorial to the throne. They analyzed in detail all the existing arguments and all the relevant ritual texts that had been discussed.³¹⁷ After two days some students of the Confucian Academy (成均館) submitted a joint memorial to rebut the joint memorial from Gyeongsang province.³¹⁸ Haboush argues that these memorials from students of the private academies and Confucian Academy marked a turning point in political discourse in the late Joseon. These memorials revealed that a perception of the urgency of the Ritual Controversy reached far beyond the courtiers of the capital into the rural intellectual community.³¹⁹ It seemed that the Ritual Controversy has stimulated significant new reactions and opinions regarding Ritual Learning among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the seventeenth century. The Ritual Controversy was not a mere trivial political power struggle.

In brief, the final decision in 1659 that a mother's mourning period for all sons on the

³¹⁵ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 5. 3. 2.

³¹⁶ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1661. 4. 21. 2.

³¹⁷ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1666. 3. 23. 1.

³¹⁸ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1666. 3. 25. 6.

³¹⁹ Haboush, *Constructing the Center*, 60.

Great Code seemed to be safe given its ambiguity. However, the second issue in 1674 asked for a clearer stance regarding King Hyojong's legitimacy.

The Ritual Controversy in 1674, unlike the Controversy in 1659, could not find shelter in the vagueness of the *Great Code* anymore. Although the *Great Code* specified a mother's one-year mourning period for all sons, there was a clear distinction between the first daughter-in-law and other daughters-in-law in the *Great Code*.³²⁰ In 1674, Queen Inseon, King Hyojong's widow, died, but Queen Dowager Jaeui, her mother-in-law, was still alive at the time. Queen Dowager Jaeui's mourning period for her daughter-in-law again became an issue. In 1659, Hyeonjong's court found a shaky mutual agreement through the vague guide for her mother's mourning period for all sons in the *Great Code*, but now they had to make a clear stance whether they admitted King Hyojong as the first son or not. Even other main ritual books, except the *Zhou Li* (周禮, Zhou Rites), specified a one-year mourning period for the eldest daughter-in-law and a nine-month mourning period (大功服) for other daughters-in-law. However, the mourning period for the eldest daughter-in-law of the *Zhou Li* was doubted and already amended to come into line with other books in the Tang dynasty. After that, a one-year mourning period for the eldest daughter-in-law had been accepted as the established theory. Initially, the Ministry of Rites proposed a one-year mourning period and obtained sanction. However, they again memorialized to change it to a nine-month mourning period in a few days.³²¹ It meant that they finally admitted King Hyojong as the second son. For a while no one touched the disputed issue.

Do Sinjing (都愼徵, 1604–1678) memorialized to the throne five months after Queen

³²⁰ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1674. 7. 6. 1.

³²¹ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1674. 2. 27. 2.

Inseon's demise,³²² which reopened the Ritual Controversy in 1674. The big difference between the Controversy in 1659 and in 1674 was that King Hyeonjong was a teenager and just followed senior ministers' opinions in 1659, but by 1674 he now he was old enough to seize the initiative regarding the Controversy. King Hyeonjong ordered courtiers to re-investigate circumstances around the final decision in 1659. The Prime Minister Kim Suheung (金壽興, 1626–1690) reported that Jeong Taehwa and Song Siyeol proposed a one-year mourning period according to the *Great Code*. Heo Mok opposed the two Songs' opinion and proposed a three-year mourning period according to the *Yi Li*. By the *Great Code* there was no distinction between the first son and others, but according to the *Yi Li* a one-year mourning period was for the second son and a three-year mourning period for the first son. Kim added that there was no specific comment whether King Hyojong was recognized as the first son or not in the final decision. It meant that they needed a reinterpretation of the one-year mourning period of the final decision in 1659: that is whether they followed the *Great Code* for all sons or the *Yi Li* for the second son.³²³

If one scrutinizes the dispute between King Hyeonjong and his courtiers in 1674, one quickly realizes that King Hyeonjong was already an expert on Ritual Learning and his will was firm. The main participant in the Ritual Controversy in 1674 was King Hyeonjong. There was no new argument from his courtiers in 1674 but only a clear stance that Hyojong's filial rank needed to be specified. King Hyeonjong finally ordered the observance of a one-year mourning period for the first daughter-in-law although the most his courtiers argued for the observance of a nine-month period.³²⁴ It meant that

³²² *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1674. 7. 6. 1.

³²³ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1674. 7. 13. 6 / 7 / 8 / 9.

³²⁴ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1674. 7. 17. 1.

final decision in 1659 was to follow the *Great Code*'s standard – a one-year mourning period for all sons – and the decision in 1674 was also to follow the *Great Code*'s one – a one-year mourning period for the eldest daughter-in-law. King Hyeonjong established the legitimacy of his line through the one-year mourning period for the eldest daughter-in-law. In contrast, the courtiers who proposed a one-year mourning period in 1659 had to wait for their political ends. However, fortunately or unfortunately, King Hyeonjong's decision regarding rituals was one of his last acts since he died a month later.³²⁵ Real political strife and purges over the Ritual Controversy happened on a full scale during the reign of the following King Sukjong (1674–1720), but this section will not discuss it at greater length since there was no further theoretical progress on rituals but just the echoes of the existing three main figures' opinions.

In conclusion, the main issue of the Ritual Controversy in 1659 and in 1674 was whether a king's filial rank was more important than his kingship itself. The final decision in 1674 verified that a kingship was predominant. However, some Neo-Confucian literati still adhered to their position against the final decision. It is a good time to compare the Ritual Controversy with the three main figures' positions.

4.3. Comparison of the Three Main Figures' Opinions

There were various opinions on the Ritual Controversy, but they could be summarized via the three main figures' positions: Song Siyeol, Heo Mok and Yun Hyu. The *Yili zhushu* and Jia Gongyan's (賈公彥, ?-?) commentary on the *Yi Li* are also briefly

³²⁵ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1674. 8. 18. 1.

studied in this section since Song, Heo and Yun referred to them heavily. The three main figures could not find any agreement but they eventually arrived at the same conclusion.

Song, Heo and Yun quoted predominantly from the *Yi Li*. The *Yi Li* was lost during the Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars (焚書坑儒) of the Qin Dynasty (秦, 213–206 BCE). After that, Zheng Xuan (鄭玄, 127–200) compiled them and wrote the first commentary on the *Yi Li*. Although there were criticisms, Zheng's version became the basis for later studies and editions. During the Tang dynasty (唐, 618–907) Gu Gong Yan wrote a commentary on the *Yi Li*, the *Zhou Li Yi Shu* (周禮義疏). Gu's commentary was one of main issues between Song and Heo. It would be better to quote *Yi Li*'s qualification of a three-year period in untrimmed mourning and Gu Gong Yan's comments on it in the first instance.

This three-year period in untrimmed mourning was worn for a father, the Son of Heaven, their ruler and the eldest son.

(*Yi Li*, Chap. 11)

All sons by the legal wife are legitimate sons (嫡子). When the eldest son (長子) dies, then the second son by the legal wife should be established as the second eldest son (次長子) and designated the eldest son.

(*Yi Li*, Gu Gong Yan's Commentary on Chap. 11)

According to Gu's commentary, King Hyojong could be the second eldest son. It would be easier if there were not any other commentary on the phrase, but Gu added four exceptional cases for a three-year period in untrimmed mourning. The four exceptional

cases are as such:

1. 正體而不得傳重
2. 傳重非正體
3. 體而不正
4. 正而不體

Jeong (正) means ‘the legitimate eldest son’ and *Che* (體) means ‘a father-son relationship.’ Thus, the first exceptional case means someone who is the eldest son but could not inherit the line. For example, the eldest son might have a serious disease. The second case means someone who inherited the line but was neither the eldest nor had a father-son relationship, for example a grandson through a concubine (庶孫) inherited the line. The third case means someone who is the legitimate son but not the eldest son who inherited the line. It indicates *Seoja* (庶子). The interpretive problem of this phrase was at the core of the dispute between Song and Heo. Song understood it as the other legitimate son (衆子), but Heo as a concubine’s son (妾子). The fourth one means someone who is the legitimate eldest son but not having a father-son relationship. It indicates a legitimate grandson (嫡孫) inherits the line, for example Crown Prince Sohyeon’s third son, Prince Gyeongang.

There are some inconsistencies and ambiguities between the *Yi Li*’s main text and Gu’s commentaries. Song Siyeol also admitted inconsistencies in the *Yi Li*, suggesting that –

On *Yi Li*, from the Son of Heaven to literati, when the eldest son dies and the second son becomes the heir as the second eldest son, the mourning period for the

second eldest son is as same as the original eldest son. By these four exceptional cases, however, when the *Seoja* inherits the line, a three-year mourning period is not for him. The second son is also *Seoja*. There are inconsistencies between commentaries and no other just argument of them by sages. We cannot take this or that.

(*Hyeonjong Gaesu Sillok*: 5th, the fifth month, 1659)

However, Song continued to explain these four exceptional cases. Song argued that King Hyojong was the third case and Crown Prince Sohyeon's son, Prince Gyeongang, was for the fourth case. It meant that King Hyojong was a son but not the right line, and Prince Gyeongang was the right line but not a son. It was a dangerous comment so Jeong Taehwa stopped Song's elaboration of his views, as mentioned previously.³²⁶ On one hand, King Hyojong could be the second eldest son, and on the other hand, he should be disqualified by the third exceptional case.

Song Siyeol's second main point was 'not wearing a three-year untrimmed mourning twice' (不二斬). It applied two cases: 1) If someone is adopted into the superordinate line (大宗), he should observe a three-year period in untrimmed mourning for his adopted parents and a one-year mourning period for his real parents; 2) A married woman should wear a three-year period in untrimmed mourning for her parents-in-law and a one-year mourning period for her real parents. It means that when one has to choose between the real parents and the adopted parents or parents-in law, he/she should follow the adopted parents or parents-in-law. Song extended these cases to the parents' mourning period for the eldest son. Song argued that Queen Dowager Jaewi once wore

³²⁶ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1659. 5. 5. 3.

Hyeonjong Gaesu Sillok, 1659. 5. 5. 1 / 2 / 3 / 4.

for her eldest son, the Crown Prince Sohyeon, so she could not wear for the eldest again. Yun Seondo, however, pointed out Song Siyeol's incorrect application of 'not wearing a three-year mourning period in untrimmed.'³²⁷ It only applied to the cases when he/she has to choose one between his/her own family and his adopted family or her family-in-law. Parents can wear a three-year untrimmed mourning for the eldest son as many times as they have to.

Song's argument, the four exceptional cases and 'not wearing a three-year untrimmed mourning twice,' seemed to disregard King Hyojong's legitimacy. However, Yi Bonggyu argues that Song Siyeol just wanted to distinguish *Jeoktong* (嫡統, the legitimate lineage) and *Jongtong* (宗統, the head lineage). King Hyojong already succeeded to the throne so the legitimacy lay in King Hyojong's line. Wearing a one-year mourning period for King Hyojong just defined that Crown Prince Sohyeon was the first son and King Hyojong the second son. It did not disregard King Hyojong's kingship and legitimacy.³²⁸ Song Siyeol also argued that a mourning period was one thing and legitimacy was another. When Song memorialized the Royal Ancestral Shrine (宗廟), and argued that King Injong and King Myeongjong had a son–father relation in terms of legitimacy, although they were siblings.³²⁹ Song also admitted the characteristic of the Royal Ancestral Shrine. Students at the Confucian Academy also argued that a mourning period and legitimacy were different things. They said that a one-year mourning period for King Hyojong did not entail disregarding his legitimacy.³³⁰ Song also admitted that a king's legitimacy was more important than his filial rank regarding the commemorative rites. So one cannot argue that Song thought

³²⁷ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 18. 1.

³²⁸ Yi, Bonggyu, "Joseonhugi Yeosongui Cheolhakjeok Hameui," 203–204.

³²⁹ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1661. 2. 15. 2

³³⁰ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1666. 3. 25. 6.

filial rank was more important than legitimacy in general.³³¹ Song just wanted to clarify one's filial rank through the mourning period. However, Song's applications of the filial rank and legitimacy were apparently inconsistent, like Gu's commentary on *Yi Li*.

Second, Heo Mok's main argument was also based on filial rank as in the case of Song Siyeol, but his evaluation of King Hyojong's filial rank was different from that of Song. Heo's argument also quoted from Gu's commentary on the *Yi Li*: "When the eldest son dies and the second eldest son becomes the heir, the mourning period for the second eldest son is as same as the eldest son."³³²

Heo also thought that the status of the first son was unimpeachable. In the case of King Hyojong, however, the original first son Crown Prince Sohyeon died and King Hyojong succeeded to the throne. It meant that King Hyojong became the second eldest son as a substitute. Song agreed with the second eldest son theory but only when the original eldest son died not leaving an heir. Song argued that King Hyojong should be disqualified since Crown Prince Sohyeon left three legitimate sons, among them the third son, Prince Gyeong, who was still alive. However, Heo argued that King Hyojong could be the second eldest son since he succeeded to the throne. Then Heo argued his own interpretation of the four exceptional cases to support his second eldest son argument. Heo limited *Seoja* as a concubine's son.³³³ However, Song answered that *Seoja* also meant *Jungja* (衆子). The *Yi Li* stated that "the younger sons by a legal wife are *Jungja*, but, in order to distinguish them from the eldest son, they are also called

³³¹ Yi, Bonggyu, "Joseonhugi Yeosongeui Cheolhakjeok Hameui," 203–204.

³³² *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 3. 16. 3.

³³³ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 10. 1.

Seoja.³³⁴ Heo's second eldest son argument was persuasive but his own interpretation of *Seoja* was incorrect.

Yun Hyu also criticized Heo's second son argument and in his letter to Heo wanted instead to focus on King Hyojong's succession to the throne. Yun thought that the distinction between the first son and others was for the ordinary people. A king is the utmost being so the kingship is more important than any other relationship, even his filial rank. If one succeeds to the throne, he becomes the legitimate eldest son as well. Yun also added, "a Lord seizes his legitimacy and one who comes from a concubine's son does his legitimacy as well."³³⁵ Yun only focused on the succession to the throne. Heo stood between Song and Yun, but on Song's side. However, Yun stands on the other side from Song's and Heo's position.

In the same letter Yun went further and argued that a king's mother was also one of his subjects (臣母說). Yun cited various historical cases and argued that once becoming a reigning monarch, the king ruled everyone equally, including his mother.³³⁶ However, the commentary on the *Analects* said that parents did not serve their son as a king.³³⁷ Students at the Confucian Academy also refuted Yun's mother-subject theory.³³⁸ Most Neo-Confucian literati in the late Joseon, including Song Siyeol and Heo Mok, opposed Yun's mother-subject theory as well.³³⁹

Interestingly, Jeong Yakyong also wrote on Ritual Learning, *Jeongchejeonjungbyeon*

³³⁴ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 4. 16. 4.

³³⁵ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 5. 1. 6.

³³⁶ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1660. 5. 1. 6.

³³⁷ *Analects*, chap. 8.

³³⁸ *Hyeonjong Sillok*, 1666. 3. 25. 6.

³³⁹ Yi, Bonggyu, "Joseonhugi Yeosongui Cheolhakjeok Hameui," 212.

(正體傳重辯). He pointed out Yun Hyu's errors but advocated Yun's three-year period in untrimmed mourning for another reason. Jeong argued –

According to the *Yi Li*, all subjects should wear a three-year period in untrimmed mourning for their king. When they wear a three-year period in untrimmed mourning regardless of a king's filial rank, his mother could not wear a lighter mourning period than subjects even though he was not her first son: since a mother's grief for her lost son should be heavier than subjects' grief for their lost king.

(*Jeongchejeonjungbyeon*, 38–41)

From Jeong Yakyong's interpretation there had been various approaches to the three main figures' argument.³⁴⁰ Hwang Wongu's study was one of the first objective interpretations of the Ritual Controversy that moved beyond colonialist historiography. Hwang began to approach the concept of *Li* itself and compare it with the three figures' arguments.³⁴¹ Although he could not point out the differences between Heo and Yun from the beginning, for a period of time Hwang's study was a new standard by which to study the Ritual Controversy. Jeong Okja gave fresh attention to the Ritual Controversy. Jeong divided the main participants of the Ritual Controversy into two groups, *Jujagaryepa* (朱子家禮派, the group of Zhu Xi's *Jia Li*) and *Goryepa* (古禮派, the group of the old rituals),³⁴² and Ji Duhwan, *Cheonhadongryepa* (天下同禮派, the group applying the same rituals to the world) and *Wangjarye Budongsaseopa* (王者禮不同士

³⁴⁰ Yi Bonggyu's "Joseonhugi Yeosongueui Cheolhakjeok Hameui" and Kim Mungeun's "Yesongyeongueui Hyeonhwanggwae Hyanghuyeongueui Banghyang" comprehensively reviewed the existing studies on the Ritual Controversy.

³⁴¹ Hwang, Wongu, "Souwi Gihaebokje Munjeye Daehayeo," 7–8.

³⁴² Jeong, Okja, "17segi Sasanggyeui Jaepyeongwa Yeron."

庶派, the group arguing that rituals for a king are not the same as for a literati).³⁴³

However, Jeong Okja's naming is incorrect. As mentioned previously, Song Siyeol, Heo Mok and Yun Hyu mainly quoted the *Yi Li* and Gu Gong Yan's commentary of it. Zhu Xi's *Jia Li* was not the main text. Ji Duhwan's naming seems to be appropriate, but Jeong Okja and Ji Duhwan's main arguments were based on the same ideas. They thought political faction and a teacher-student relationship directly influenced the three figures' argument. In particular, Ji tried to find a correlation between the Four-Seven Debate and the Ritual Controversy.

Yi Yeongchun, however, opposed the existing divisions and pointed out various mistakes in the existing studies. Yi argues that political and academic party did not influence the Ritual Controversy. For example, Kim Jangsaeng, a teacher of Song Siyeol, argued for the special status of the royal family, unlike Song Siyeol. Heo Mok and Yun Hyu were Southerners, but their assertion was different from each other. Some Westerners, Pak Sechae (朴世采, 1631–1695) and Yun Seongeo (尹宣舉, 1610–1669), defended Yun Hyu's three-year period in untrimmed mourning. In contrast, the Southerner Heo Jeok supported the *Noron's* Song Siyeol.³⁴⁴ Lastly, Yi Bonggyu uses the concept of *Chinchin* (親親; bonding together) and *Jonjon* (尊尊, grading) to explain the three figures' argument. Yi Bonggyu is concerned with kingship, legitimacy and management of power from the broader perspective.³⁴⁵ Yi Yeongchun's study is one of the latest ones and Yi Bonggyu's approach is more philosophical, but their latest studies do not locate the meanings of the Ritual Controversy within late Joseon intellectual contexts.

³⁴³ Ji, Duhwan, "Joseonhugi Yesong Yeongu."

³⁴⁴ Yi, Youngchun, *Joseon Hugi Wangwigyeseung Yeongu*.

³⁴⁵ Yi, Bonggyu, "Yesongeui Cheolhakjeok Bunseok-e Daehan Jaegomto."

In conclusion, Song Siyeol tried to pinpoint a more concrete and fundamental factor from within the filial rank system. Heo Mok and Yun Hyu admitted that a kingship could be used to understand a king's filial rank. All of them believed that the Ritual Learning could be the standard to understand a complex reality but the rituals were more complex than expected in theory and in reality. The meaning of Ritual Learning will be studied in the final section.

4.4. Meaning of the Ritual Controversy within Joseon Neo-Confucianism

The Ritual Controversy is sometimes believed to be one of the most impractical debates. However, the Controversy dealt with one of the most crucial issues of the time since Joseon Neo-Confucian literati needed a concrete standard to rebuild Joseon as an ideal Neo-Confucian society and polity. The meanings of the Ritual Controversy should be analyzed within this context.

The conventional research relates the Ritual Controversy of the late seventeenth century to the Four-Seven Debate of the early sixteenth century in order to locate the meanings of the Controversy within Joseon intellectual trends. Jeong Okja suggests a line, Yi I–Kim Jangsaeng–Kim Jip–Song Siyeol and explains the link between the Four-Seven Debates and the Ritual Controversy.³⁴⁶ However, Kim Jangsaeng and Song Siyeol stood on the opposite side to each other on the ritual issues. Kim Jangsaeng, a teacher of Song Siyeol, argued for the special position of the royal family. Song Siyeol argued that the filial rank was more common and superior to kingship. Personal assertions on the ritual

³⁴⁶ Jeong, Okja, 17*segijeonban Yeseoeui Seongripgwajeong*," 408.

issues were not related to their faction or school. Even within the same faction or school there were various arguments and debates on the Ritual Controversy. Furthermore, the issue of principle and material force was not the main subject of the Ritual Controversy. More significantly, the Four-Seven Debates cannot provide sufficient evidence for the sudden interest in Ritual Learning in the seventeenth century. This is one of the basic questions. Why did an old-fashioned issue, Ritual Learning, suddenly revive in Joseon, in the seventeenth century? In this context, the meaning of the Ritual Controversy should be studied from a different perspective other than the Four-Seven Debate.

In fact, Ritualism based on the agnatic principle no longer worked for a political philosophy of the feudal period after the Song dynasty.³⁴⁷ However, Ritualism had been one of the ways to re-establish social order in China. Although it is a disputable notion, whenever the Han people (漢族) lost their land or dynasty, they used rituals as a major reorientation of Confucianism. Interestingly, in the seventeenth century, Confucian ritualism rose in importance in the scholarly circles centred on the Lower Yangtze area. Ritualism also emerged as the common framework in which the Chinese literati re-examined their role in relation to Confucian heritage, the imperial state and the common people.³⁴⁸

The situation with Lower Yangtze Han scholarly circles in the seventeenth century was similar to that of Joseon Neo-Confucian literati. Although Joseon did not lose their land or dynasty, they lost the centre of their Neo-Confucian world, Ming. For a similar reason, Ritual Learning was fashioned among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the seventeenth century. Joseon Neo-Confucian literati responded to the Ming-Qing

³⁴⁷ Ji, Duhwan, "Joseonjeongieui Jongbeopjedoeui Ihaegwajeong," 6–7.

³⁴⁸ Chow, Kai-wing, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China*, 223.

transition by using Sino-centrism, as mentioned in the previous chapter. If Sino-centrism dealt mainly with a diplomatic policy, Ritualism was for domestic policy. The sudden flourishing in Ritual Learning was Joseon intellectuals' Neo-Confucian response to the chaotic situation from the fall of Ming, the centre of Chinese civilization, to the victory of Qing, the barbarian nation. In addition, after the two wars, the *Imjin* and the *Byeongja*, the Joseon dynasty needed to be rebuilt. As the legitimate successor of Chinese civilization, the rebuilding should be conducted under Neo-Confucianism. Ritual Learning played a key role in reorganizing the Joseon dynasty. Therefore, the meanings of the Ritual Controversy should be discussed together with the international and domestic situation in the seventeenth century.

When the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati tried to re-establish the Joseon dynasty, they used Sino-centrism and Ritualism. When they tried to reform the society in fifteenth century, in reality the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati had neither enough power, nor a comprehensive understanding of Neo-Confucianism in theory. In the late sixteenth century they were theoretical prepared but their first task was the *Imjin* war. At any rate, they accomplished their practical role as courtiers and leaders of the righteous army. The discourse of *Jaejojieun* did not need any Neo-Confucian explanation either. Joseon already served Ming as son did father. In addition, Ming helped Joseon with no thought for Ming's safety. However, in the seventeenth century Joseon Neo-Confucian literati got an opportunity in the end. They already had political power and their theoretical preparations demonstrated it. Furthermore, the relationship between Ming and Joseon under the discourse of *Jaejojieun* was better than ever. Under these circumstances the barbarian Qing emerged and defeated Ming. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's world turned upside down. The Ritual Controversy emerged at the intersection between the

Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's desire to be at the centre of Chinese civilization under the discourse of Sino-centrism and the revived interest in Ritual Learning reflected Joseon's domestic needs after the two wars.

The Ritual Controversy eventually influenced the Horak Controversy. It was not a matter of who was more conservative; Song Siyeol's side gave filial rank the absolute status, which was higher than kingship and for Yun Hyu vice versa. Although Song Siyeol is said to have been more conservative, according to each perspective it cannot be conclusively determined which of the two, Yun Hyu and Song Siyeol, was more conservative. Yun Hyu seems to be more conservative given the fact that he followed the original intention of the agnatic principle, which was invented to consolidate kingship. On the other hand, Song Siyeol seems to be more conservative from the point of view that he followed Zhu Xi's *Jia Li* and applied it even to the King. Therefore, it is not a matter of who is more conservative, practical, right or wrong.

Joseon Neo-Confucians found out one thing through the Ritual Controversy, that is that Ritual Learning could not be their answer since the *Li* was more complex than expected. The next generation of Joseon Neo-Confucian literati had to find a solution to accomplish their grand mission to become the last and ideal Neo-Confucian society.

Conclusion

In theory and in practice the rituals were not a main issue among both the Joseon literati and royal house throughout the early Joseon. In the seventeenth century the Joseon Neo-

Confucian literati began to research *Li* on a large scale. Ritual Learning became a new trend among them since it was needed to help develop their new dream of making an ideal society come true. If proper ritual practice was followed then this would help transform society. However, the reality of Joseon royal succession had been that illegitimate sons had taken the throne four times in succession. It had not been a political issue in early Joseon, but after the deeper understanding of Ritual Learning it became a major political issue. The Ritual Controversy came at the meeting point between the deeper understanding of the Ritual Learning by Joseon Neo-Confucian literati and the succession of illegitimate royal offspring. The main argument of the Ritual Controversy was over whether the different sides stressed the (filial rank) order or kingship. One side believed that a king's filial rank was more important than his kingship itself, while the other side believed that a kingship was the most important thing. The Joseon literati tried to find a concrete standard to explain their turbulent age through the Ritual Learning. They believed that *Li* could play a role. However, the reality was more complex than expected. They failed to find a concrete standard through Ritual Learning and tried to find it in a more central aspect of Neo-Confucianism. Their next journey was the Horak Controversy.

5. The Pinnacle and the end of Joseon Neo-Confucianism:

The Horak Controversy

After the failure to find a concrete explanation within the concept of *li* to understand a complex and turbulent age in the Ritual Controversy, the Neo-Confucian literati tried to find a more concrete standard to explain their age. In this chapter, I look at the two groups involved in the Horak controversy (湖洛論爭), the philosophical issues over which they clashed, the result of this clash and what this tells us about the limitations of Neo-Confucianism. In addition, the issues of the Horak Controversy were one of the main themes of Neo-Confucianism from its beginning, and there had already been similar debates on these issues in China. Therefore, the differences between the understandings of the founders of Neo-Confucianism in China and that of Joseon in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century should be studied. In other words, the reason why longstanding issues were revived among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century is analyzed in this chapter. In addition, the meanings of the Controversy will be discussed in terms of Joseon Neo-Confucian intellectual trends.

5.1. Typical Misunderstandings of the Horak Controversy

It is said that the Horak Controversy arose among Westerners (西人), especially between Namdang Han Wonjin (南塘 韓元震, 1682–1750) and Oeam Yi Gan (巍巖 李柬, 1677–1727), in the early eighteenth century, then it surfaced among a number of

scholars around Gyeonggi province supporting Yi Gan, who were called Rakhakpa / Nakhakpa (洛學派). On the other side, Han Wonjin was supported by a number of scholars mainly around Chungcheong province, which were called Hohakpa (湖學派). It is also known that the main issue of the Controversy was whether the nature of man and objects are the same or not (人性 物性 同異論). However, these brief explanations of the Controversy contain some typical misunderstandings, which are re-examined in the first section.

One of the main misunderstandings of the Hohak Controversy is about the origin of the Hohakpa and Nakhakpa. The confusion regarding their origin came from the first historical research on the Controversy, Jang Jiyeon's *Joseonyugyoyeonwon* (An Origin of Joseon Neo-Confucianism) in 1922. Jang pointed out that the Hohak and Nakhak originated from the debate between Han Wonjin and Yi Gan.³⁴⁹ Jang's point of view affected the studies that followed, including Hyeon Sangyun's *Joseonyuhaksa* (A History of Joseon Neo-Confucianism) (1948) and Yi Byeongdo's *Joseonyuhaksa* (A History of Joseon Neo-Confucianism) (1987). Moreover, one of the rare studies of the Controversy in English, Yun Sasun's 'The Korean Controversy over Chu Hsi's View on the Nature of Man and Things' (1986) also followed substantially Jang's point of view. These studies deny the existence of Hohak and Nakhak before the debate between Han and Yi. Finally, these trends culminated in the denial of the naming Hohak and Nakhak.

Yi Aeheui, however, argues that Han Wonjin and Yi Gan came from the same Chungcheong province and there could not be agreement within each inner circle, Hohakpa and Nakhakpa. Yi Aeheui concludes that the Hohak Controversy was not an

³⁴⁹ Jang, Jiyeon, *Joseon Yugyo Yeonwon*, 325.

appropriate term and proposed *Inmulseongdonginonjaeng* (人物性 同異 論爭, A Controversy of whether the nature of man and objects are the same or not).³⁵⁰ As Yi Aeheui points out, both Han Wonjin and Yi Gan were from the same province and furthermore had the same teacher Suam Gwon Sangha (遂菴 權尙夏, 1641–1721). It means that their debate was one of Hohakpa's inner circle debates. Before Han Wonjin and Yi Gan debated over the nature of man and objects, however, their teacher Gwon Sangha had already formed his own point of view on it. When Han Wonjin and Yi Gan debated the nature of man and objects, Gwon showed the flag of support to Han and made it Hohakpa's public opinion. On the other side, in the Nakhakpa, there was also a similar debate between Yi Hyeonik (李顯益, 1678–1717) and Eo Yubong (魚有鳳, 1672–1744). However, Nakhakpa's public point of view on the nature of man and objects had already been formed even before Yi and Eo's debate.³⁵¹

Ironically, the opposite assertion of the origins of the controversy is also written in Jang Jiyeon's same book. Jang said that the origin of Hohakpa and Nakhakpa could be traced back to Gwon Sangha and Kim Changhup (金昌協, 1653–1722).³⁵² It means that Hohakpa and Nakhakpa already existed before the debate between Han Wonjin and Yi Gan. Jang's contradictory point of view has been supported by Yu Bonghak's study. Yu argues that there was already a group around Hanyang, and their interests were already different from those of other local scholars (鄉儒). Yu groups them and calls them *Gyeonghwasajok* (京華士族).³⁵³ Jo Seongsan also says that there were already different groups among the Westerners from the Injo Restoration (1623) and the origin of

³⁵⁰ Yi, Aeheui, "Jugiseoleui Ironjeok Simhwa," 374.

³⁵¹ Mun, Seokyun, *Horak Nonjaeng Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 207–233.

³⁵² Jang, Jiyeon, *Joseon Yugyo Yeonwon*, 312.

³⁵³ Yu, Bonghak, *Joseonhugi Hakgyewa Jisikin*, 95–137.

Nakhakpa could be traced back to the Injo Restoration group.³⁵⁴

Therefore, it seems that there was a certain group around Hanyang, which could be called *Gyeonghwasajok* or Nakhakpa, and their points of view had been slightly different from those of other local Neo-Confucian scholars for a long time. It would be right to say that the Horak Controversy did not make Hohakpa and Nakhakpa but the differences between Hohakpa and Nakhakpa were clarified finally through the Horak Controversy.

The second typical misunderstanding is closely related to the first one. It is about the issue of whether the nature of man and the nature of objects are the same or not. The Horak Controversy had been imagined as the debate of the nature of man and objects. If one just focuses on the debate between Han and Yi, it is easy to skirt over the various issues of the Controversy. As mentioned above, Yi Aeheui also proposes to use the *Inmulseongdonginonjaeng* as an alternative title for the Horak Controversy. The issues of the Controversy, however, were in fact varied, including the discourse of the Supreme Ultimate (太極論), the discourse of the consciousness of them (知覺論), discourse of the mind and nature (心性論), and so forth. These concerns were developed through various debates among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. The Horak Controversy covered these various debates.

In brief, the Horak Controversy did not make Hohak and Nakhak but the differences between them were verified through the Controversy. In addition, the Controversy

³⁵⁴ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 29–43.

covered various debates beyond the discourse of nature of man and objects. Therefore, the Horak Controversy should be studied within Joseon intellectual trends.

5.2. Discourse of the Supreme Ultimate (太極論)

The various issues of the Horak Controversy had been formed and developed through a series of complicated events from the early seventeenth century. Ming, the existing pivot of Neo-Confucian worldview, was conquered by a barbarian tribe Jurchen (Qing), who gained more power to the dismay of Joseon's Neo-Confucian literati (Chapter 4). Another tool used to stabilize Joseon society, rituals, was too complex to be a firm standard by which to rebuild an ideal Neo-Confucian society (Chapter 5). Under these circumstances the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati hungered for an absolute standard, which was stronger than any other age. They believed in the existence of the eternal truth, the Supreme Ultimate (principle) without doubt, so their concern was focused on how to know it and how to apply it to the real world. The various issues of the Controversy were begun from their problems of application problems.

The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati tried to re-establish the social order using Ritual Learning, as pointed out in the previous chapter. Through the Ritual Controversy, however, they learned that the reality was much more complex than the theory. Ritual Learning could be an instrument to explain the delicate and complicated situation but also made it more complex. Therefore, the following Joseon Neo-Confucian literati began to ask what immutable standard was needed to explain the complex situation. They expected that the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate would explain the variety of

the real world. It was Gwon Sangyu (權尙遊, 1656–1724) from the Hohakpa, who first questioned the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world.

Before all of this, there was a considerable overlap between the Ritual Controversy and the Horak Controversy. First of all Gwon Sangyu was Gwon Sangha's brother, who was the legitimate follower (嫡傳) of Song Siyeol. Second, the year Gwon posed the question was in 1678, which was just four years after the Ritual Controversy. After the Neo-Confucian literati failed to find a solution to explain the complex world through the Ritual Controversy, they had searched to find it. The year of the first question on the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world might be a good link between the Ritual Controversy and the Horak Controversy.

There was another considerable link between the Ritual Controversy and the Horak Controversy in the Nakhakpa: Kim Changheup (金昌翕, 1653–1722) who first enquired about the relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world. Kim Changheup was Nakhakpa's founder with his brother Kim Changhyeop. Surprisingly, their father Kim Suhang was one of the main participants in the Ritual Controversy on Song Siyeol's side. It means that the founders of both Hohakpa and Nakhakpa were closely related with the Ritual Controversy, especially on Song Siyeol's side. Song Siyeol was also the rediscoverer of Sino-centrism as well, and he is a good link between the discourse of Sino-centrism, the Ritual Controversy and the Horak Controversy. Song's main interest was to discover a more absolute truth. He used the concept of Chinese civilization to explain and overcome the turbulent situation through the discourse of Sino-centrism. During the Ritual Controversy one's filial rank was believed

to be the unchangeable factor among various evaluations of the *Li*. However, it was eventually found that the evaluations and interpretations of the *Li* were more complex than expected. It was natural that Song's succeeding generation tried to establish a more profound principle through the discourse of Ultimate Supreme.

The atmosphere among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati at that time can be inferred through their questions. Kim Changheup's question was independent of Gwon Sangyu's question, and Kim's answer was also different from Gwon's. However, it was not a coincidence that they asked about the relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world around the same time. According to Kim Changheup's letter, Kim occasionally heard the debates on the Supreme Ultimate among his colleagues.³⁵⁵ It meant that the relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world was already a somewhat fashionable issue among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati at that time.

Although it seems that the fashion of the Supreme Ultimate had a sudden appearance, the Supreme Ultimate theory had been one of the important issues from the early Joseon onwards. Gwon Geun, one of the foremost Neo-Confucian scholars of the early decades of Joseon, also started with the Supreme Ultimate theory in his book, *Diagrammatic Treaties for Entering Upon Learning* (入學圖說). The book was to predominate over all other Neo-Confucian intellectual concerns during the first century of the Joseon dynasty.³⁵⁶ Yi Hwang also placed Zhou Dun Yi's Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate at the beginning of his Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning (聖學十圖), which was presented to King Seonjo.

³⁵⁵ Kim, Changheup, *Samyeonjip*, Vol. 18, <答拙修齋趙公>.

³⁵⁶ Kalton, "The Writings of Kwon Kun," 91.

The Supreme Ultimate had been also recognized as one of the best starting points from Zhu Xi's age. Zhu Xi placed Zhou Dunyi's Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (太極圖說) in the first chapter of his book, the *Reflections on Things at Hand* (近思錄), which was a guide for beginners. Zhu said in a preface to the book that he selected passages concerned with fundamentals and closely related to daily application.³⁵⁷ It means that the Supreme Ultimate theory was one of the Neo-Confucianism basis and practical issues as well. There were of course expressions of discontent with the theoretical and rather difficult first chapter. Lu Zuqian, the other coauthor of the book, explained that Zhu's plan was to enable the student to know their terms and to have something to look forward to.³⁵⁸

There were, however, differences between Zhu Xi in the twelfth century and Joseon Neo-Confucians in the late seventeenth century. Zhu's main concern was to establish a systematic ontology and cosmology as the metaphysical foundation for Neo-Confucianism. However, Neo-Confucianism in the late Joseon was already one of the most powerful philosophies. The late Joseon Neo-Confucians already believed in Zhu's ontology and cosmology and so their question concerned the relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world rather than the Supreme Ultimate itself.

It would be better to start with Zhu's theory of the Supreme Ultimate in order to understand Gwon Sangyu's and Kim Changheup's question, the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world. The first sentence of the main text in Zhu Xi's *Reflections on Things at Hand* is this: Master Zhou Dunyi

³⁵⁷ Zhu, Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 1.

³⁵⁸ Zhu, Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 3.

said that ‘The Ultimate of Nonbeing (無極) and also the Supreme Ultimate!’³⁵⁹

The quotation section is only five characters in Chinese, ‘無極 而 太極,’ but a very controversial issue. According to Mathew’s Chinese–English Dictionary, ‘而’ could be understood ‘and then’ or ‘in addition.’ If one follows ‘and then,’ it could be translated like this; ‘there was the Ultimate of Nonbeing and then the Supreme Ultimate’. It means that the Supreme Ultimate originated from the Ultimate of Nonbeing. If so, it could be a Taoist discipline, ‘being (有) was from nonbeing’ (無). On the other hand, if one follows ‘in addition,’ the Supreme Ultimate and the Ultimate of Nonbeing are dealt with on an equal level. Zhu Xi followed the second translation and explained that the Ultimate of Nonbeing is a description of the Supreme Ultimate. It means that Zhu wanted to make a sharp distinction between Taoism and Neo-Confucianism. Furthermore, the Supreme Ultimate had been recognized as a visible thing after Confucius’ age, but Zhu changed it to an invisible mystery with Ultimate of Nonbeing.³⁶⁰ Zhu’s comments about the above quotation are cited here:

The operations of Heaven (天) have neither sound nor smell. And yet this (Ultimate of Nonbeing) is really the axis of creation and the foundation of things of all kinds (ultimate being). Therefore it says that “the Ultimate of Nonbeing and also the Supreme Ultimate.” It does not mean that outside of the Supreme Ultimate there is an Ultimate of Nonbeing.

(Reflections on Things at Hands: 5)

³⁵⁹ Zhu, Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 5.

³⁶⁰ Yi, Gyeonggu, “Horaknonjaengeul Tonghae Bon Cheolhaknonjaengeui Sahoejeongchijeok Euimi,” 64.

The part, ‘neither sound nor smell,’ indicates the Ultimate of Nonbeing and ‘the axis of creation and the foundation of things of all kind’, the Supreme Ultimate. The Supreme Ultimate is both being and nonbeing or the synthesis of being and nonbeing. On the other hand, it could be considered as neither being nor nonbeing, that is, something transcending both being and nonbeing.³⁶¹ Zhu called it ‘the mystery of naturalness’ (本然之妙).³⁶²

After the short but controversial phrase of the Supreme Ultimate and the Ultimate of Nonbeing, activity (動) and tranquility (靜) of the Supreme Ultimate is described:

The Supreme Ultimate through movement generates yang (陽). When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil (靜). Through tranquility generates yin (陰). When tranquility reaches its limit, activity begins again. So movement and tranquility alternate and become the root of each other, giving rise to the distinction of yin and yang, and the two modes are thus established.

(Reflections on Things at Hand: 5)

In relation to these phrases, there are two major questions. The first question is whether the Supreme Ultimate can move or not. Zhu adopted Cheng Yi’s (程頤, 1033–1107) idea of principle. Cheng Yi argued that all principles are plainly evident and the constant principle remains changeless. However, Zhu Xi followed Zhou Dun Yi’s view that the Great Ultimate is capable of activity or motion.³⁶³ Zhu Xi explained that there must be principle before there is a universe. The Ultimate of Nonbeing is a principle not a

³⁶¹ Aimin, Teng, “On Chu His’s Theory of the Great Ultimate,” 94.

³⁶² Zhu, Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Commentary of Reflections on Things at Hand*, 67.

³⁶³ Aimin, Teng, “On Chu His’s Theory of the Great Ultimate,” 97.

thing.³⁶⁴ It means that the movement of the principle is not like a movement of a thing. Principle (the Supreme Ultimate) possesses activity and tranquility, and material force (yin and yang), thus it can be active or tranquil. It is also related to the second question: if the Supreme Ultimate existed before yin and yang, is the Supreme Ultimate a supervisor of yin and yang? Zhu said that it does not mean it is outside of yin and yang, but the Supreme Ultimate is in yin and yang.³⁶⁵

Joseon Neo-Confucians in late Joseon did not doubt the subtle relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and material force (yin and yang) although the founders of Neo-Confucianism devoted themselves to illuminate the subtle relationship. Since Chinese Neo-Confucians in the twelfth century established 'Neo' Confucianism, as its founders they focused on an overall system. In addition, they had to show distinctions regarding Buddhism or Taoism.³⁶⁶ They had to fight against external enemies, Buddhism and Taoism, and, at the same time, solve internal inconsistencies, such as between Zhou Dun Yi's Supreme Ultimate and Cheong Yi's principle. However, the context of late Joseon Neo-Confucians was different from them. Neo-Confucianism was already a dominant ideology and not 'neo' anymore in the late Joseon. Zhu Xi's discipline was understood as the orthodoxy, apart from a few figures. On the contrary, late Joseon Neo-Confucians, as the intellectuals of the period, had to answer contemporary questions using Neo-Confucianism. Through complicated international situations, Ming's fall and Qing's victory, and delicate domestic situations relating to ritual issues, their interests naturally changed to more concrete and practical concerns. They did not doubt the existence of the Supreme Ultimate, yin and yang, principle and material force. In

³⁶⁴ Zhu, Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Commentary of Reflections on Things at Hand*, 65.

³⁶⁵ Zhu, Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Commentary of Reflections on Things at Hand*, 65.

³⁶⁶ Aimin, Teng, "On Chu His's Theory of the Great Ultimate," 104–106.

addition, they had less interest in the subtle relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and yin and yang. They had to drag it into the real world. The relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world was their main question. Essentially, the relationship between Neo-Confucianism and their shaky daily life was the main question.

Zhu Xi's explanation of the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world could be a good first starting point:

By the transformation of yang and its union with yin, and the Five Agent (五行) of Water (水), Fire (火), Wood (木), Metal (金) and Earth (土) arise... The Five Agents arise, each with its specific nature... Heaven (乾) constitutes the male element and Earth (坤) constitutes the female element. The interaction of these two material forces engenders and transforms the myriad things. The myriad things produce and reproduce, resulting in an unending transformation.

(Reflections on Things at Hands: 5-6)

The variety of the myriad things resulted from the production and reproduction by those Five Agents and two forces (yin and yang). However, Zhou Dunyi added a clear explanation in his diagram that each thing has its own nature, but all are the one Supreme Ultimate. Zhou Dun Yi appears to emphasize the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate, but Zhu Xi commented on it in these terms:

From the angle of the male and female, they have their own natures; yet the male

and the female each had its own Supreme Ultimate. From the angle of the myriad things, each has its own nature and each its own Supreme Ultimate. The myriad things, taken together, consist of one Supreme Ultimate (萬物統體 一太極). Each individual thing, taken separately, has its own Supreme Ultimate (一物各具 一太極).

(Commentary of Reflections on Things at Hands: 75–76)

According to Zhu Xi's commentary, the myriad things as a whole have one Supreme Ultimate, and therefore it is said that principle is one, and each individual thing has its own Supreme Ultimate which is nothing but its nature, thus it is said that 'principle is one but its manifestations are many' (理一分殊). Zhu Xi admitted the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate (principle) but also emphasized the variety of the myriad things. It seems that Zhu wanted to distinguish his doctrine that 'principle is one but its manifestations are many' from the doctrine of Huayan School's one-and-all (華嚴).³⁶⁷ Zhu, however, excessively emphasized the aspect that manifestations are many. According to Zhu, principles of individual things do not result from sectioning the one principle, but the Supreme Ultimate remains as its entirety in individual things.³⁶⁸

On Zhu Xi's commentary there was a debate between Gwon Sangyu and Pak Seche in 1679. Gwon Sangyu's question was framed by this phrase; each man has his own nature (性), and his nature is also principle. If so, why are there differences among people? However, did Zhu Xi not say that each man has the Supreme Ultimate as an entirety (not a part)? Pak Sechae answered Gwon's question in this way; "it just means that

³⁶⁷ Teng, Aimin, "On Chu His's Theory of the Great Ultimate," 105-106.

³⁶⁸ Teng, Aimin, "On Chu His's Theory of the Great Ultimate," 104.

myriad things are from one Supreme Ultimate, but principle in the real world are various according to the variety of material force.”³⁶⁹ Pak admitted the variety of the real world is introduced by the variety of material force. According to Pak there is no place for the Neo-Confucian ideal harmony by principle in the world anymore. In addition, the Supreme Ultimate should be out of the real world as a transcendental being. After the Supreme Ultimate generates yin and yang it cannot influence the real world, but material force could overwhelm the real world and even principle. Gwon Sangha also supported Pak’s point of view and admitted that the variety of principle was under the variety of material force.³⁷⁰ Now the Supreme Ultimate had been recognized as the axis of creation and the foundation of things of all kinds, but it also became a trivial thing in the shadow of material force. Gwon Sangha clearly emphasized the variety of the material force rather than the oneness of Supreme Ultimate, yet it seemed to fail to explain the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate in the real world. It was in 1679 that Gwon Sangha formed his own point of view of the Supreme Ultimate. The foundation for the following Hohakpa point of view was already formed around this time. They already admitted that the variety of the myriad things was introduced by the variety of material force in the real world.

Among the Nakhakpa there was a similar question about the relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world in 1685. This was advanced by Kim Changheup, as mentioned previously. Kim developed his point of view through letters to Jo Seonggi, and he emphasized the immanence of the Supreme Ultimate in the real world, unlike Hohakpa’s point of view. Kim did not mean that the Supreme Ultimate of the human mind was exactly equal to the Supreme Ultimate, but he did argue that there was a

³⁶⁹ Gwon, Sangha, *Hansujaejip*, Vol. 5, 1679. 1. 23.

³⁷⁰ Gwon, Sangha, *Hansujaejip*, Vol. 5, 1679. 1. 23.

Supreme Ultimate of the human mind since Zhu Xi said that each individual thing, taken separately, has its own Supreme Ultimate. In the end, Kim emphasized the immanence of the Supreme Ultimate rather than its transcendence.³⁷¹ As a matter of course, Kim stressed the oneness of myriad things more than their variety in the real world.

Late Joseon Neo-Confucians began to pursue their answer regarding the perfection in the real world. However, the variety of the real world also needed to be answered. One of the most important things is that both Hohakpa and Nakhakpa began to be concerned about the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world at the same time without any academic debate. This was one of the fatal questions around the Ming-Qing transition. In addition, this was a continuous question after the Ritual Controversy. Hohakpa and Nakhakpa already established their differences from this first issue, the relationship between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world. While Hohakpa's preference leaned toward the variety of the real world, Nakhakpa's was toward the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate. Hohakpa believed that the true answer was in the variety of the real world but Nakhakpa believed that it was beyond the real world. In brief, Hohakpa's one was too worldly to be ideal, and Nakhakpa's answer was too ideal to be found in the real world. They did not exchange their opinions at this first stage, and the contrast between them was made clearer through the discourse of the nature (性) and mind (心) in the next stage.

5.3. Discourse of the Mind and Nature (心性論)

³⁷¹ Kim, Changheup, *Samyeonjip*, Vol. 18, <答拙修齋趙公>.

The relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world was more evident in this second stage. It was developed from the discourse of one's consciousness (知覺論) to the discourse of not-yet-arousal of one's mind (未發論)³⁷². On these issues, there was a significant dichotomy concerning the question of mind and nature. Is nature principle? (性即理) or is mind principle? (心即理) The intermediation between the mind and nature was none other than the bridge between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world. In the end the discourse of the mind and nature directly pointed at the core of the Horak Controversy. The more they investigated, however, the deeper they fell in the mire in this second stage.

Neo-Confucian tradition divided a human being's mind into two conditions: aroused (已發) and not-yet-aroused (未發). The condition of the not-yet-aroused mind was already prescribed in the first chapter of *the Doctrine of the Mean*:

What Heaven has conferred is called the nature... While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, (喜怒哀樂之 未發) the mind may be said to be in the state of equilibrium (中). When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of harmony (和). This equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human acting in the world, and this harmony is the universal path they all should pursue.

(*Doctrine of the Mean*: Chap. 1)

Before arousal, the condition of the mind is described as 'the state of equilibrium' (中).

³⁷² Mun Seokyun's study, "Oe-amgwa Namdangeui Mibalronbyeon" is of the discourse of not-yet-arousal of one's mind between Han Wonjin and Yi Gan. Kim Taenyeon's study, "Jigak" is of the consciousness.

After arousal, one should pursue the harmony (和) in spite of disruptions introduced by those feelings or material force. It seems that the equilibrium is the lost value and the harmony is the alternative goal in reality. ‘The universal path they all should pursue’ is also the most crucial issue in Neo-Confucianism, that is, self-cultivation. The state of the not-yet-aroused mind is one of the most important logical bases in Neo-Confucianism. At the same time it could be an intermediation between the mind and nature.

Nature is understood as a destiny from Heaven according to the passage mature and destiny are, essentially, not two different things. What resides in Heaven is called destiny and what resides in man is called nature.³⁷³ In another passage, nature is clearly mentioned as principle:

Nature is principle. Why is it called nature and not principle? The reason is that principle is a general term referring to the principles common to all things in the world, while nature is principle in oneself... The character *hsing* (性) consists of two part, *sheng* (生, to produce) and *hsin* (心, mind). It is called nature because from birth man possesses principle complete in his mind.

(Neo-Confucian Terms Explained: 1-2)

Nature had been recognized as principle, which was a special term indicating the principle in one’s mind from birth. The assertion that ‘nature is principle’ had a firm base in Neo-Confucianism. In addition, it was one of its main differences from Buddhism:

³⁷³ Ch’en Ch’un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, 1-2.

When the Buddhists talk about nature, they are simply like the Confucians talking about mind. They simply consider the unobstructed intelligence and consciousness of the mind as nature.

(Neo-Confucian Terms Explained: 1-3)

According to Buddhism, mind is nature and mind could be principle. Neo-Confucians criticized and denied the Buddhist assertion ‘mind is nature’ (心即性). If so, why did Neo-Confucianism defend the theory ‘nature is principle’ (性即理) and oppose the theory ‘mind is principle’? (心即理) Neo-Confucianism set up a wall between nature and mind, principle and mind. However, Buddhism breaks this wall saying that mind is principle. Neo-Confucianism wanted to keep this wall but make a path between them. Now there is one matter left. Which one can be the intermediation, principle or material force? They had to answer the reason for evil things and complex reality. Let us start from the first one which Neo-Confucianism wanted to keep; Nature is principle.

Nature is simply principle; it is perfectly good and not evil. The mind, however, involves both principle and material force. Principle is of course perfectly good, but material force involves two opposite poles; it is not entirely good. When active, it easily tends toward evil. The mind is an active thing, not something lying there quiet and deadly still.

(Neo-Confucian Terms Explained: 1-3)

According to the passage above, the possibility of evil things is locked up in one’s mind, but one’s nature is protected as a perfect good. If one does evil things, it comes from one’s mind. One’s nature is not accountable for one’s wrong. The theory that ‘nature is

principle' is not only the possibility that one can do good things but also the reason that one should do good things. The possibility of self-cultivation is also based on the theory that 'nature is principle.' Therefore, the theory that nature is not only principle but also a good thing was required for Neo-Confucian self-cultivation. The possibility and the reason for being a good person or a sage should be based on the assertion that 'nature is principle.'

The theory that nature is perfectly good or principle, however, had not been easily formed from the beginning. Chen Chun summarized the discourses of human nature from Mencius to two Chengs (Cheng Hao, 程顥 (1032–1085) and his brother Cheng Yi, 程頤 (1033–1107)): 1) Mencius said that human nature is good, which was from the point of view of its great foundation. However, he did not discuss the endowment of material force; 2) Xun Zi (荀子, 313–238 BC) considered human nature to be originally evil, and Yang Xiong (楊雄, 53 BCE–18 AD) regarded it as a mixture of good and evil; 3) Han Yu (韓愈, 768–824) considered human nature to consist of three grades (the superior, the medium and the inferior). Chen evaluated that those three figures, Xun Zi, Yang Xiong and Han Yu, talked only about material force; 4) Su Shi (蘇軾, 1036–1101) in the Song dynasty regarded human nature as beyond good and evil, and Hu Hong (胡宏, 1106–1161) thought it to be neither good nor evil. On the basis of the connection between human nature and Heaven Su Shi and Hu Hong began to vaguely assert that human nature is what is naturally born; 5) After Zhou Dun Yi's Diagram of the Great Ultimate the two Chengs finally said that nature is principle. They declared that Yao (堯) and Shun (舜) and the ordinary person are the same in respect to principle.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ Ch'en Ch'un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*: 1-2.

Although nature was accepted as a perfect good thing without any evil aspect, the relationship between the mind and nature still remained a delicate and complex issue. At this stage, a human's mind divided into two conditions that needed to be studied, aroused (已發) and not-yet-aroused (未發). The not-yet-aroused mind is still mind. If so, is the not-yet-aroused mind good or bad? During the first half of the twelfth century there were two different ways to understand the not-yet-aroused mind. Even Zhu Xi shifted from one to the other in his forties. Zhu's first understanding is called 'the old theory of equilibrium and harmony' (中和舊說) and the final one, 'the new theory of equilibrium and harmony' (中和新說). In brief, according to the old theory, the mind before arousal is nature itself. If one follows this line of thought, it would be easier to explain self-cultivation, which was just to recover one's mind to the former state, equilibrium. Therefore, it introduced quiet sitting in meditation as the way to experience the essence of the mind and to settle nature. In silent meditation, one was to clarify one's mind by expelling all selfish desires.³⁷⁵ Regardless of arousal, however, one's mind is not principle but just material force according to the conventional Confucian viewpoint. Moreover, Zhu thought that the not-yet-aroused mind of the old perspective only exists in theory and it was needed just as a logical premise. Zhu wanted to investigate one's mind in reality therefore he abandoned the old position and changed his point of view. According to the new theory, the mind is not principle anymore, but is also divided into two conditions; the mind before arousal is the state of tranquility (精) and the mind after arousal, the state of activity (動). However, it also raised a series of questions. If the mind before arousal is material force, is it still a perfect good? If one follows the old theory, the mind before arousal is still equilibrium, principle and a perfect good, but if one follows the new theory, the mind before arousal is just material

³⁷⁵ Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu His's Ascendancy*, 59–64.

force and could be good or evil. The mind before arousal became neither the principle nor the lost value according to the new theory of equilibrium and harmony. Neo-Confucianism needed an intermediate state between principle and material force, nature and mind, good and bad, and the ideal world and the real world.

The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the seventeenth century began to doubt the theory that ‘nature is principle’ itself and overcame the weakness of Zhu Xi’s new theory of equilibrium and harmony. It was Min Iseung (閔以升, 1649–1698) who started to doubt whether nature is principle or not. There was a debate between Min Iseung and Kim Changhyeop on the relationship between consciousness (知) and wisdom (智) in 1697. Kim Changhyeop answered Min’s questions as a defender of the conventional Neo-Confucian point of view.³⁷⁶ According to conventional Neo-Confucianism consciousness had been understood as the activity of the mind. On the contrary, wisdom had been recognized as one of the Four Beginnings (四端; 仁 (humanity), 義 (righteousness), 禮 (propriety), 智 (wisdom)) in one’s nature. Therefore, Min’s question, the relationship between consciousness and wisdom, directly related with the relationship between the mind and nature. Wisdom as one of the Four Beginnings had enjoyed a superior status given its capacity to judge things: “To know the right is right and the wrong is wrong and to be absolutely sure is wisdom.”³⁷⁷ Wisdom was a standard of judgment itself, but Min Iseung divided the judgement into two, the object of judgment and the supervisor of judgement. According to Min, whether a thing is right or wrong is up to the thing itself, not wisdom. Before a man dictates the right or wrong of an object via wisdom, the right or wrong was already pre-determined in the object

³⁷⁶ Kim, Changhyeop, *Nongamjip*, Vol. 3, <答閔彦暉>

³⁷⁷ Ch’en Ch’un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, 73.

itself.³⁷⁸ Therefore, the wisdom is not a standard to judge a thing anymore, but is degraded to the status of a mirror that reflects whether a thing is right or wrong. In the end, Min separated wisdom from principle. According to Mun Seokyun's research, Min Iseung's nature already came into one's mind, and it was not a pure principle anymore. In this case wisdom and one's nature were degraded to material force. Kim Changhyeop decisively rejected Min's point of view, and for Kim the theory 'nature is principle' was an established creed.³⁷⁹

After the debate between Min Iseung and Kim Changhyeop among the Nakhakpa, Gwon Sangha of the Hohakpa also developed his point of view on the relationship between consciousness and wisdom. At this stage differences in the relationship between the mind and nature surfaced fully between those two schools. In addition, various debates between Hohakpa and Nakhakpa emerged around the matter of the mind and nature.³⁸⁰ To Nakhakpa, nature as principle is dependent on the activity of the mind, but Hohakpa criticized Nakhakpa's point of view that he argued made nature hollow (懸空說性). Hohakpa emphasized the inseparable relationship between mind and nature in reality. It was Han Wonjin who boldly questioned the possibility that the psychophysical component (氣質) (material force) could disrupt the existence of original nature (principle) itself. In 1707 Han composed a short treatise, *Explanation of the Original Nature and the Psychophysical Nature*. He drew attention to the fact that the psychophysical component is present in reality even before arousal in one's mind.³⁸¹

Han stated:

³⁷⁸ Kim, Changhyeop, *Nongamjip*, Vol. 3, <答閔彦暉>

³⁷⁹ Mun, Seokyun, *Horak Nonjaeng Hyeongseonggwae Jeongae*, 130–136.

³⁸⁰ Mun's research (2006) classified these various debates by subjects.

³⁸¹ Kalton, "Horak Controversy," 253.

Heaven and Earth and all creatures receive the material force of yin and yang as their physical stuff and the principle of the Supreme Ultimate as their natures. And the nature and the psychophysical component are inseparable and also are not admixed. Therefore, on the basis of their not being admixed one exclusively refers to the principle, then it is called the original nature (本然之性) refers to the material force it is what is called the psychophysical nature (氣質之性)...

(*Namdangjip* 30: 7a–10a, cited in
Sourcebook of Korean Civilization Vol. 2, p. 254)

Han Wonjin started from the theory that principle and material force are inseparable and are also not admixed (理氣 不相離 不相雜). In the end, he argued that the nature in one's mind could be principle but also material force since they were not inseparable. From the moment Heaven had invested in man, principle and material force were inseparable. Even before that moment, from the moment when the Supreme Ultimate generated yin and yang, principle and material force were together. Han also argued:

When the mind is aroused, principle mounts upon material force; therefore good and evil are alike the issuance of the psychophysical nature (氣質之性), and what is good is the original nature not being disrupted by material force, and the evil is the original nature being disrupted by material force. So what the psychophysical nature issues is identical with what the original nature (本然之性) issues...

(*Namdangjip* 30: 7a–10a, cited in *Sourcebook of
Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 254)

Since Han said that principle mounts upon material force, principle should become

passive. Although principle and material force are together, the arbiter of good and evil seems to be material force not principle. The theory that nature is principle was placed in a dilemma. It was Yi Gan who argued against Han's treatise, asking a question in reaction to Han.

I wondered if according to Han's theory this means that one can with a mind mixed with clarity and darkness, goodness and evil, also respond to the changing situation of the myriad creatures with the result that in every case the response would be perfect? Or again whether, although there is naturally one-sidedness, narrowness, darkness and evil in the function of the mind, with an exclusive reference to principle it poses no problem with regard to its being the condition described as the harmony that is without excess or deficiency, the fulfilled Tao of the world.

(*Oeam Yugo* 12: 29a, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 256)

In fact Neo-Confucian dogma, Mencius' doctrine regarding the goodness of human nature and the harmony of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, was certain on this point. Yi Gan's question implied that Han should harmonize his theory with this dogma. Yi's main question was whether the mind before arousal is perfectly good or not.

Han replied to Yi Gan's question:

I am not sure whether you (Yi Gan) would say, regarding what is called the original nature, that before the mind is aroused, it inheres in nothing or inheres in something. If you say it inheres in nothing and exists alone, that is a kind of odd

statement I have never seen in the classics or commentaries. If you say it must have something in which it adheres in order to exist, then what is wrong with inclusively referring to the material force in which it inheres and calling it the psychophysical nature? ...

(*Namdangjip* 30: 7a–10a, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 254)

Finally Han concluded like this:

But before the mind is aroused, material force does not play a role, and so one can only see the perfect goodness of principle and does not see the goodness and evil of the material force. So I would also state that before the mind is aroused, the psychophysical nature cannot be seen, but it can be seen only after it is aroused.

(*Namdangjip* 30: 7a–10a, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 254)

Han emphasized the co-existence of principle and material force. According to Han, there had been principle and material force from the beginning, even in the mind before arousal. It means that the not-yet-aroused mind could be either good or bad since there is always material force with principle. If so, Han had to satisfy the existing theory that ‘not-yet-aroused mind is good.’ Han said, ‘before the mind aroused, material force does not play a role’ (氣不用事). It was not only Han who asserted that material force does not play a role. According to Zhu’s new theory, the mind before arousal was not principle anymore. Zhu Xi also mentioned this: “Before they are aroused, there is good

but not bad since material force does not play a role.”³⁸² However, the activity of material force was endless according to the discourse of the Supreme Ultimate. Is there a moment that material force is still there?

In the end, Han Wonjin and Yi Gan met on the question whether the mind before arousal is perfectly good or not. One side, mainly Nakhakpa and including Yi Gan, could not abandon the conventional understanding that ‘nature is principle’ and ‘the mind before arousal is good.’ It meant that the not-yet-aroused mind could be the intermediation between the principle and material force or the Supreme Ultimate and the real world. They tried to protect the principle as an eternal and purely good being and preserved it in one’s mind. The other side, however, countered that Yi Gan’s point of view was rather hollow and idealistic. Hohakpa wanted to find principle within the real world, but it was already under the control of material force. According to Hohakpa, principle could not exist alone in one’s nature. It became more difficult to find something perfectly good in one’s mind since principle was always with material force in one’s mind from birth. In brief, their debates could be summarized like this; is there any possibility to find an intermediate state between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world within one’s mind? It related directly to the first issue, that is the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the real world.

The late Joseon Neo-Confucians, both Nakhakpa and Hohakpa, had tried to find an absolute truth or a firm standard. They tried to find something perfectly good in one’s mind, especially the not-yet-aroused mind. However, their endeavour gradually became shrouded in mystery. Finally, Han Wonjin admitted that material force could be good

³⁸² Zhu Xi and Qian Zu Lu, *Commentary of Reflections on Things at Hands*, 146.

(氣純善) before arousal.³⁸³ It means that Han failed to find a concrete ground for principle in one's mind. Principle was replaced by material force. Material force coexisted from the beginning and could also be perfectly good. Moreover, material force became a decisive factor of good and bad. The more they searched, the more they were puzzled as time went by, the more complex it became. The principle, nature and the not-yet aroused mind were scattered and, ironically, there was nothing but material force after their fierce debate to find the constant standard. They wanted to find something good in the Supreme Ultimate to explain the variety of the real world but, again, only the variety of the real world was left.

5.4. Discourse on the Nature of Man and Objects (人物性論)

The third stage of the Horak Controversy was a natural and logical development from the first (the Supreme Ultimate) and the second (discourse of the mind and nature). The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the eighteenth century failed to explain the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world. In addition, they failed to find a concrete ground for principle even in one's mind. They began to change their concern from one's mind to one's nature. Whether a man has a Supreme Ultimate as his real nature from his birth or not was the vital issue in the final stage of the Horak Controversy. They should find a shelter for the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate in one's nature since they failed to find it in the real world and in one's mind.

³⁸³ Han, Wonjin, *Namdangjip* Vol. 9, 201-212b.

In 1708 Han Wonjin elaborated ‘the three different levels of meaning for nature.’ It is famous for a debate on the comparison between the nature of man and that of objects, but, in fact, their main concern was about the nature of man. In relation to nature Han said:

There is the nature that is the same for both humans and other creatures (the nature spoken of in Zhu Xi’s commentary on chapter 22 of the *Doctrine of the Mean* as “the nature of other people and creature is likewise my own nature”); there is the nature that is not the same for human and other creatures but is the same for all humans (as in Zhu Xi’s commentary on the Gao Zi chapter of *Mencius* that says, “If one speaks in terms of principle, then as for the endowment of humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, how could that be something other creatures could obtain in its entirety”); there is the nature that is not the same from person to person (as in the *Analects*, “The master said, ‘By nature, men are nearly alike.’”)

(*Namdangjip* 7: 2b, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, pp. 258-259)

According to the conventional understanding of nature, principle had played a role in the oneness of myriad things at the first level, and material force had involved differentiation at the last level. Han kept the first level and subdivided the second level, differentiation by material force, into two different levels. Although it appears not to be a large difference from the conventional understanding, Yi Gan firmly opposed Han’s theory. Han’s first level, the sameness for both humans and other creatures seems to be similar to that of Yi Gan.

At first, Han Wonjin stated:

If one approaches humans and other creatures and abstracts material force and speaks only in terms of principle, then it is an undifferentiated single substance that cannot be called any particular principle or named in terms of any particular characteristic, but the principle of heaven and earth and all creatures and the characters of humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are completely within it. This is the nature that is the same for humans and all creatures.

(*Namdangjip* 7: 2b – 3b, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 259)

However, Yi Gan argued:

In terms of “One Origin,” both the Mandate of Heaven (天命) and the Five Constant Virtues (五常) transcend form and concrete objects. In this case there is no difference of partial (偏) and complete (全) endowment between man and objects. This sameness is called the original nature (本然之性).

(*Oeam Yugo*, 7: 16a)

It is not easy to find any difference between these two comments on oneness since both Han and Yi admitted that the nature of man and things are the same. Therefore, their debate seems to be superfluous. However, their understanding of human nature stood on opposite sides. On the one hand, Yi Gan’s understanding of nature is more conventional than Han’s. Yi asserted that original nature is the “One Origin.” In this case, principle refers to the origin of the universe such as the Mandate of Heaven, destiny, the Great Ultimate, the original nature and even the Five Constant Virtues. These seemingly

different concepts all refer to the principle. Yi's principle was apparently an abstract universal concept such as destiny or the Supreme Ultimate. On the other hand, Han's principle was the concrete and individual principle inherent in the material force in one's mind. Han depended on Zhu's comment that "the nature comes from principle but is not separated from material force, while consciousness comes from material force but is not separated from principle. The mind comes into existence when nature and consciousness are combined, and then we have the name mind."³⁸⁴ Thus, Han understood that principle could be called nature only when it had entered into material force in one's mind. If principle existed independently out of material force in one's mind, it should have been called principle, not nature.

According to their different understanding of nature, the inequalities of man and things were also explained differently.

Han Wonjin stated:

Humans have been endowed with material force in its completeness, and so their natures are integral. Other creatures have been endowed with material force that cannot be complete; therefore their natures likewise cannot be integral. This is the nature that is different for humans and other creatures, but it is the same for all humans. If one speaks in terms of the principle admixed with material force, then there are a myriad inequalities in the hardness and softness, the good and the evil; this is the nature that differs from person to person.

(*Namdangjip* 7: 2b-3b, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 259)

³⁸⁴ Ch'en Ch'un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, 1-3.

However, Yi Gan said:

In terms of “different entities,” both the Mandate of Heaven and the Five Constant Virtues are influenced by physical nature. Therefore, in this case, there are many differences not only between man and things but also between worthies and ordinary minds. Thus, where partial endowment prevails, the physical form and destiny become off balance, and where complete endowment prevails, their physical form and destiny become balanced. This difference is called the physical nature.

(*Oeam Yugo*, 7: 16a)

Yi used a conventional method to explain the relationship between principle and material force: exclusive reference (單指) and inclusive reference (兼指). Han also admitted the existence of the references but emphasized that principle and material force are always together.

Han and Yi’s opposite attitudes also are found in their mutual criticism during the debate. From Han’s side, Yi’s assertion seemed to be vain (空) since the oneness by principle was too theoretical and idealistic.³⁸⁵ From Yi’s side, however, Han misunderstood physical nature as nature.³⁸⁶ In fact, it is useless to make an effort to judge which one is right or wrong.

The late Joseon Neo-Confucians reached the unexpected conclusion on the controversy. The effects of the debate between Han and Yi were more serious than expected. The Horak Controversy was to reveal the vagueness and contradictions in the central tenets

³⁸⁵ Yi, Gan, *Oeam Yugo*, 10:22b.

³⁸⁶ Yi, Gan, *Oeam Yugo*, 10:25b.

of Neo-Confucianism. First, if one followed Han's theory, there was no reason behind self-cultivation. According to the Han's third level, the differentiations between sages and the normal were already decided from one's birth. It may also be true that no one could be a sage since his nature was already mixed with principle and material force from birth. In addition, one of the basic Neo-Confucian research methods also collapsed. According to conventional Neo-Confucianism, there is principle in every creature. If one understands principle in one's mind at the first stage, one could assume and understand other principles in every creature. In the end, harmony via the Supreme Ultimate was broken as well.

Second, according to Yi's theory, there was still a gap between the Supreme Ultimate and the real world. The Supreme Ultimate once generated material force and then no one can stop or control material force's activity. The Supreme Ultimate could not influence the real world anymore. It is only a logical request that the not-yet-aroused mind is principle and good. In reality there is no moment when the mind is perfectly good. The harmony by the Supreme Ultimate is also just an idealistic motto. The late Joseon Neo-Confucians could not find any concrete standard in Neo-Confucianism, they just located its weaknesses. Furthermore, they stopped accepting Zhu Xi's thought indiscriminately and began to inquire into Zhu's philosophy more carefully and thoroughly.³⁸⁷ It meant that Zhu Xi lost his unrivaled status among the Joseon intellectuals.

An epilogue

³⁸⁷ Youn, Sa-soon, "The Korean Controversy over Chu Hsi's View on the Nature of Man and Things," 581–582.

Late Joseon Neo-Confucians finally failed to find a concrete ground even in human nature. Yi Gan tried to protect the principle but his principle did not set foot anywhere. Han tried to pull the principle into the real world, but it mixed with material force and disappeared in the end. Im Seongju (任聖周, 1711–1788), a disciple of Han Wonjin, went further than Han. Im defined principle as basically nothing more than material force in motion:

What fills every nook and cranny of the cosmos, both above and below, within and without, with no beginning or end, generating a multitude of transformations, producing a multitude of men, objects and events, is material force and nothing but material force. There are no empty cracks into which we can squeeze that word “principle.”... Material force naturally moves and functions the way it does of its own accord, that’s all. “Naturally” is just another way of referring to what the Sages refer to as the Tao or principle... After all, we are only talking about material force here. What is doing, what is done is material force... The goodness of human nature comes from the goodness of the material force that constitutes the psychophysical component of all human beings.

(*Nongammunjip* 19: 2b–6b,

cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, p. 264)

According to Im’s comments, late Joseon intellectuals had ‘squeezed that word principle,’ but there is nothing left but material force. There was of course the other radical side opposing Im. Yi Hangro (李恒老, 1792–1868) emphasized that the principle has responsibility for all that was good in this world and revived a kind of taboo that

mind is principle:

A visitor once asked me (Yi Hangro) whether the mind and principle were the same or different. I replied that there are those who talk about the mind in terms of material force. That is the way Zhu Xi talked about the mind when he said that the mind was ethereal material force. There are also those who talk about the mind in terms of principle. This is the way Master Cheng talked about the mind when he said that the heart-and-mind, which exists within every human, is principle. Spoken of in terms of material force, the mind is an outer wall around human nature... Spoken of in terms of principle, the mind is the master of the body and the basic normative pattern directing the tens of thousands of actions and interactions a human being must engage in. This is the mind Mencius was talking about when he said that he would receive what Heaven had granted him and make it his first priority to act according to those principles.

*(Hwaseo Seonsaeng Munjip 22: 10b–12b, cited in
Sourcebook of Korean Civilization Vol. 2, pp. 266-7)*

Yi's efforts to revive principle seemed to be late, although he replaced nature with mind and emphasized principle again. Another interesting and important thing was that Zhu Xi was put aside. The established theory that 'nature is principle and mind is material force' was overturned. Now there was no harmony or oneness by principle, but just an extreme insistence on principle or material force. If one emphasizes the independence of the principle, the principle would hang in the air. The principle as an abstract and transcendental being cannot influence the real world anymore, or if one emphasizes co-

existence between principle and material force, there would be no absolute good thing or moment. It was concluded that material force could be good. It meant that there was no distinction between principle and material force, only Im's comment, 'nothing more than material force,' is left on the one side and, Yi's comment, 'mind is the master of body,' on the other side.

In conclusion, the Horak Controversy could be the pinnacle of Joseon Neo-Confucianism but also its final stage. The eighteenth and nineteenth century Joseon Neo-Confucian literati failed to find an answer for their time: the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world, a concrete ground for principle even in one's mind or nature, and the Supreme Ultimate (principle) as his real nature from his birth. They tried to find their way through Neo-Confucianism but lost their way in the Neo-Confucian cosmos.

5.5. Meanings of the Horak Controversy within Joseon Neo-Confucianism

Some have argued that the Horak Controversy dealt with outdated and impractical issues, but I suggest that the issues of the Horak Controversy were appropriate and essential for their context. Some say that the Controversy was the pinnacle of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, but there was nothing left in Joseon Neo-Confucianism after the controversy. Therefore the Horak Controversy must also mark the end of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. This final section evaluates the Controversy within Joseon Neo-Confucianism.

One of the most significant meanings of the controversy is the reason why these out-of-date issues, the discourse of the Supreme Ultimate, of mind and nature, and the comparison between the nature of man and objects, were revived by Joseon Neo-Confucian literati in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. Scholars have explained it from various perspectives. Jo Seongsan summarizes them into three main reasons: the international situation relating to Qing, socio-economic development, especially development of the middle class (中人) and domestic political circumstances relating to factionalism.³⁸⁸ Mun Seokyun places weight on the domestic political situation and focuses on the responsibility of Joseon intellectuals at the time.³⁸⁹ Jo Hohyeon also studies the relationship between the Four-Seven debates and the Horak Controversy.³⁹⁰ Kim Gihyeon's study was focused on moralism,³⁹¹ and Kim Hyeon approached it from the perspective of religious sentiment.³⁹²

Those various reasons have, however, slightly missed the core of the Controversy: 1) a discrimination against barbarian (Qing) based on the Sino-centrism is one of the main backgrounds of the Controversy, but it is not its main theme. Through the discourse of Sino-centrism the discrimination against the barbarian (Qing) was already solved. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati wanted to civilize Qing with a developed Neo-Confucian civilization and make Joseon the ideal Neo-Confucian society. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, however, they faced a new problem, Qing's high civilization. They needed to answer this new question: can the barbarian Qing be a more civilized society? This possibility was related to the nature of man; 2). The social and

³⁸⁸ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 262–266.

³⁸⁹ Mun, Seokyun, *Horak Nonjaeng Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 29–31.

³⁹⁰ Jo, Hohyeon, "Joseon Seongrihak Yeongu-e Daehan Ilgochal."

³⁹¹ Kim, Gihyeon, "Sunsu Dodeokjueui Gwanjeomeseo Bon Namdang Hanwonjineui Inmulseong Iron."

³⁹² Kim, Hyeon, "Joseonhugi Mibalsimroneui Simhakjeok Jeongae."

economic development of the middle class was not a main theme either. It was true that Joseon's middle class grew up in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. However, their development was not a main issue in the Horak Controversy. It was not an essential or crucial issue; 3) Factionalism or moralism also seemed to be distant from real meanings. The Horak Controversy was an academic debate unlike the Ritual Controversy, and Neo-Confucian moralism was an issue around the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement (chap.1). 4) Mun Seokyun's explanation, responsibility for the needs of the time is one of the proper reasons. Mun argues that the responsibility of the late Joseon Neo-Confucian literati was to rebuild Joseon with Neo-Confucianism. This is true but requires more explanation given the results of the Controversy. This section will deal with this; 5) Kim Hyeon's religious approach is fresh, but he just asserted that it was from a common religious sentiment. It also needs the buttressing of more concrete reasons in the historical context of late seventeenth and eighteenth century Joseon rather than just a common religious sentiment.

There were two major events, Ming's fall and Qing's victory, and the Ritual Controversy, in the seventeenth century, which are good starting points to comprehend meanings of the Controversy but, unfortunately, there is no study on the relationship between the Ritual Controversy and the Horak Controversy yet.

The responsibility of the intellectuals was to explain the situation of the time. On the one side, men such as Kim Sangheon stubbornly insisted on an anti-Qing stance although they recognized their inferiority to Qing in reality. On the other side, men such as Choe Myeonggil explained Qing's prosperity using Xian Shu Xue, as mentioned in the previous chapter. According to Xian Shu Xue, Ming's fall and Qing's prospering

could be explained with the changes of numbers and accepted as an unavoidable fate.³⁹³ Moreover, their thorough study of Xian Shu Xue caused their longing for principle (一理). Jo Seongsan argues that this hunger for the Supreme Ultimate (principle) was continued by a few figures and influenced the Nakhakpa.³⁹⁴ It meant that Nakhakpa's concerns about the Supreme Ultimate were developed through the explanation of Qing's victory. Although Jo's main interest was in the Nakhakpa, Hohakpa's concerns about the Supreme Ultimate should be explained. Both Hohakpa and Nakhakpa were interested in the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world.

Given these complicated issues Joseon intellectuals expected that Ritual Learning would be a good manifestation of the oneness of principle. Through Ritual Learning they hoped to rebuild their society, but they learned that ritual issues were more complex than expected. The following generation after the Ritual Controversy apparently sought an absolute standard beyond Ritual Learning. Now the responsibility of the intellectuals doubled. They had to explain Qing's victory and also the varied interpretations of ritual issues. Therefore, the responsibility of the intellectuals after the Ritual Controversy did not remain in just rebuilding Joseon. The relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world became a fervent question.

This fervent question also made a difference between the Four-Seven Debates and the Horak Controversy. The need in the sixteenth century was to develop Neo-Confucian morality. In particular Jo Gwangjo criticized the immorality of the meritorious. After a

³⁹³ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 45-55.

³⁹⁴ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 62-70.

series of literati purges, Jo's group lost their political power but pursued the reasoning behind Neo-Confucian morality through the Four-Seven Debates. The final goal of Neo-Confucianism was to be a sage through ceaseless self-cultivation. The aim of the Horak Controversy, however, was to find an absolute standard to explain their age, rather than Neo-Confucian morality, since Joseon had already accepted Neo-Confucian morality in full. Neo-Confucian morality was an eternal theme but not the fervent question of the time.

Qing's prospering and its explanation via Xian Shu Xue could be a good background for Nakhakpa. The responsibility of intellectuals and Neo-Confucian morality could be another explanation, but the Horak Controversy had more meanings among the figures directly or indirectly associated with the Ritual Controversy. The Horak Controversy emerged on the back of the sense of loss of an absolute standard for rebuilding of Joseon after the Ritual Controversy.

The second major meaning of the Horak Controversy relates to its influences and evaluations. In fact, the Controversy had been ignored in Joseon intellectual circles for a while. There were only three research treatments of the Controversy before Yun Sasun and his colleagues began to devote attention to it in the 1980s. They ascribed it a second ranking in importance after the Four-Seven Debates.³⁹⁵ After new revelations about the Controversy, there were two major trends in its study. On the one hand, they tried to find the meanings from the perspective of modernism. On the other hand, they evaluated the Controversy highly as the pinnacle of Neo-Confucian understanding.

³⁹⁵ Yi, Gyeonggu, "Yeongjo ~ Sunjo Yeongan Horaknonjaengeui Jeongae," 146–147.

First, from the perspective of modernity, they tried to find a link between the Nakhakpa and Silhak. Yu Bonghak asserts that Nakhakpa influenced the development of the Bukhakpa (北學派).³⁹⁶ Yi Gyeonggu also agrees that Bukhakpa was more conservative than Nakhakpa.³⁹⁷ In fact, Nakhakpa as one of the Noron (老論) were willing to tolerate and accept the Soron (小論) and the Southerners (南人), since they regarded that the sage and ordinary men were essentially the same. On the contrary, Hohakpa believed that the nature of the sage and ordinary men was different, so strictly excluded the Soron and the Southerners.³⁹⁸ However, their different political opinions did not mean that Nakhakpa was more modern than Bukhakpa. According to Nakhakpa, there is no discrimination between the sage and the ordinary men and even between men and objects, but it does not mean that Nakhakpa asserted the democratic principle of equality. In addition, their concerns were different from the scientific concern with objects. Even Hong Daeyong, who was recognized as a link between Nakhakpa and Bukhakpa by Yu Bonghak, explained matter in terms of principle and material force.³⁹⁹ It means that Hong's worldview still remained within the orbit of Neo-Confucianism. Choe Yeongjin also focuses on the concerns surrounding the Controversy and suggests its ecological interests.⁴⁰⁰ However, the comparison between men and objects was neither the starting point nor a goal of the Controversy. They just wanted to discover the origins of human nature and to compare them with a myriad of different things in the process of pursuing the Controversy.

It is true that Hohakpa's political stance was more conservative than Nakhakpa's, but no

³⁹⁶ Yu, Bonghak, *Joseonhugi Hakgyewa Jisikin*.

³⁹⁷ Yi, Gyeonggu, "Yeongjo ~ Sunjo Yeongan Horaknonjaengeui Jeongae."

³⁹⁸ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrokgye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 410.

³⁹⁹ Yi, Bonggyu, "Hangukyuhak Yeongueui Gwajewa Jeonmang," 40.

⁴⁰⁰ Choe, Yeongjin, "Inmulseongdongironeui Saentaehakjeok Haeseok."

one could judge that Hohakpa's perspective on Neo-Confucianism was more conservative than Nakhakpa's. Hohakpa wanted to preserve the dignity of man, and Nakhakpa, the omnipresence of the principle. Nakhakpa declared themselves orthodox Neo-Confucians. Kim Ho asserts that Nakhakpa maintained the absolute theory that nature is principle, which had been one of the mainstream views in Neo-Confucianism.⁴⁰¹ Ironically, Nakhakpa pulled Neo-Confucianism down to the bottom.⁴⁰² Hohakpa also broke the Neo-Confucian base since principle was replaced by material force. There was nothing but material force among Han Wonjin's followers. It is false to conclude that Nakhakpa was more liberal or modern than Hohakpa and vice versa. Both Nakhakpa and Hohakpa were conservative in terms of Neo-Confucianism in their own ways; Hohakpa had a conservative doctrine of inseparability of principle and material force, while Nakhakpa held on to their own conservative doctrine of the purely goodness of the human nature. As a result Hohakpa reached a conclusion that human nature has the potential to be either good or bad, and Nakhakpa separated principle from material force and hung it in the air as a transcendent existence. Both, Hohakpa and Nakhakpa, attempted to be orthodox Neo-Confucians, but ironically brought about a sudden end to Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, one should not be slow to highlight a few aspects of either Hohakpa or Nakhakpa in order to find a link between modernity and the Horak Controversy. If one wants to find the meanings of the Controversy, one should start from this point.

Second, from the point of view of Neo-Confucianism, the Horak Controversy is highly rated as the pinnacle of the Neo-Confucianism. However, if one follows this assertion, one has to answer, what were the results of the Controversy? Many scholars have

⁴⁰¹ Kim, Ho, "Nongam Kim Changhyeop Sasangeui Yeoksajeok Ihae," 145.

⁴⁰² Jo, Hohyeon, "Joseon Seongrihak Yeongu-e Daehan Ilgochal," 228.

surmised that Joseon's understanding of Neo-Confucianism was deepened through the Controversy. Hohakpa and Nakhakpa had enthusiastically discussed the Supreme Ultimate, the mind and nature, consciousness and wisdom, the not-yet-aroused mind, the nature of man and things, and so on. If so, what was their conclusion? Did they deduce the answer for the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world? Was the not-yet-aroused mind purely good? Did they make an agreement on the human nature? Were the nature of man and objects the same or not? No! They were unable to get any answers or reach an agreement through the Controversy. Only Neo-Confucian inconsistency and Zhu's errors were revealed. The conventional Neo-Confucian base, the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate, the harmony by the principle, self-cultivation through examination of one's nature or mind and so on, collapsed as a result of the Horak Controversy. Therefore, the Horak Controversy could be the pinnacle of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, but also account for its sudden end. This final call was produced by this fervent internal controversy, not by any external forces.

Conclusion

The Horak Controversy was apparently the pinnacle of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati eagerly pursued the eternal truth by applying it to the varied and complex real world. The depth of their philosophical questions reached higher than any other age. However, they could not get any solution besides first locating the inconsistency of Neo-Confucianism. In fact, from Ritual Learning they

tried to find an answer but failed. The Horak Controversy was the logical outcome of the failure of the Ritual Controversy. Horak was concerned with the philosophical and ethic foundations of the ideal Neo-Confucian Joseon, but simultaneously reached its pinnacle but also its sudden fall through the Horak Controversy. Now the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati lost their own discipline, Neo-Confucianism. Only two options were left. One was to abandon Neo-Confucianism and find the answer in his own time and context. The other was to squeeze Neo-Confucianism again in order to find the answer. There were various and fresh intellectual movements available between these two options. Silhak can be seen as one of them or as a popular name covering these new movements. The last chapter asks if Silhak was the last rally of Joseon Neo-Confuciansim or whether it witnessed the emergence of new Joseon intellectual trends.

6. Silhak: New beginning or Last Moment

After the failure to find a more concrete standard within the Neo-Confucianist philosophy, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were perplexed. They should have found an answer inside or outside of their approach. There were, apparently, fresh intellectual movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Joseon. Silhak (實學, practical learning/real learning) could be one of those new movements or a popular name to cover all those new movements. This chapter questions this view, and attempts to show that many of the roots of practical learning are to be found in Neo-Confucianism itself, since no historical movements is wholly new or not indebted to its past.⁴⁰³ However, Silhak had been understood as something of a new movement, the seed of modernity. This chapter strongly doubts this binary understanding based on modernity theory. This chapter will discuss, not Silhak itself, but the invented connection between Silhak and modernity. These clouds of modernity could provide the spadework for the study of various vivid intellectual movements in eighteenth and nineteenth century Joseon.

First, this chapter asserts that the notion of Silhak has been found and formed by Korean nationalist historians. This development in the formation and conception of Silhak will be examined closely. Second, the classifications of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak will be critically re-studied. Through scrutinizing the intellectual lineage of Joseon, a connection between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak will be outlined. The evaluation of Silhak is the third stage, which is divided roughly into two parts. Silhak has been considered as a ‘failed dream’, and Silhak scholars’ family backgrounds, careers and their influence have been underestimated, and these are the ‘failed’ part. Those Korean nationalist

⁴⁰³ Bary, “Introduction,” in Bary and Irene Bloom ed., *Principle and Practicality*, 3.

historians haunted by modernity theory believed that some Silhak scholars displayed a nationalist consciousness. This distortion is the ‘dream’ part, which will be scrutinized in the final section.

6.1. Modernity and Silhak Studies

Modernity is believed to be a phenomenon with a firm place in history but, in brief, modernity is not a historical phenomenon.⁴⁰⁴ Since modernity is a notion based on Western historical experience, it would be easy to assume that all non-Western cultures were stagnant before they met Western modernity. In the end, scholars want to find some seeds of modernity in a traditional society and previously existing society which is then divided into traditional and modern parts. If one cannot find a modern sprout, one would try to find an explanation as to why there was no evidence of this or why the society ‘failed’ to accept new modern conceptions and frameworks.⁴⁰⁵ Of course Korean nationalists haunted by modernity theory believed that Silhak was the modern sprout but that traditionalist Neo-Confucianism had nipped the sprout in the bud. From this viewpoint, the antagonism between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak had grown. Neo-Confucianism became a scapegoat and the existing studies of Neo-Confucianism must be ignored. Modernity framework distorted Joseon history, especially late Joseon intellectual history. We cannot figure out the true picture of Silhak or new intellectual movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth century – even Neo-Confucianism – without reassessing the theory of modernity.

⁴⁰⁴ Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” 171.

⁴⁰⁵ Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” 172–174.

Korea has been classified as one of the non-Western countries and examined within the framework of modernity. In the early twentieth century imperial historiography – written mostly by Japanese historians but also by a number of Korean historians – assumed that the Joseon dynasty was stagnant before it had met Western culture. They tried to find an explanation as to why Korea ‘failed’ to accept new modern elements. They provided justifications for Japanese control over Korea by depicting Korean history as something that had shown no capacity for autonomous development or any progressive spirit. The main characteristics of colonialist historiography are the following: Korean history before the Japanese annexation of Korea was so stagnant that the late Joseon dynasty had not even reached the feudal stage of development (停滯性論: the stagnant theory); external forces – namely China, Manchuria and Japan – had determined Korea’s historical development (他律性論: the external forces theory).⁴⁰⁶

Against the Japanese colonialist historians’ focus on Japan’s role as the positive external stimulus, Korean nationalist scholars’ focus was on counter-arguing that there were seeds of modernity, internal sources of energy that moved forward the Joseon dynasty. This argument was dominant among the school of nationalist historiography (民族史學者), whose patriotic goal was to resist the existing Japanese imperialistic historical framework.⁴⁰⁷ Finding seeds of modernity in the Joseon dynasty has been one of the major tasks of Korean historiography. Korean nationalist historians laboured hard to discover signs of modernity from everywhere and anywhere. Their studies on the historical fabric of Korean society covered a wide range of disciplines including politics, the economy and social structures. In the end, Silhak was suggested as one of the seeds

⁴⁰⁶ Pai, Hyeong il, *Constructing “Korean” Origins*, 36.

⁴⁰⁷ Kim, Giseung, “Sikminjisidae Minjokjueui Sahakjadeuleui Yeoksainsik,” 74–75.

of modernity and evidence of the internal drive for modernity developed in the Joseon dynasty, before Japan defeated Joseon.⁴⁰⁸ These nationalist historians' patriotic goal seemed to be successful, and they appeared to overcome the stagnant theory and the external forces theory by means of their discovery, Silhak.

However, Korean nationalist historiography would remain trapped in another framework, modernity, as long as Silhak remained as the seed of modernity. This view leads scholars to presume that intellectual society of the Joseon dynasty was divided into two parts, a traditional Neo-Confucian part and the modern sprout, Silhak. There is also a tendency to disregard the traditional aspect, Neo-Confucianism, to emphasize the modern part, Silhak. This view also presumes that all Neo-Confucian discourses, those discussed in the first to the fifth chapter in this thesis, would be overcome by Silhak. The latter has been conceived as a failed dream of modernization in and of the Joseon dynasty, whereas Neo-Confucianism has been treated as an obstinate mule to be blamed for the stagnation of the Joseon dynasty. What is more, where rationality and empirical method is discovered it is usually interpreted as a sign of modernity.⁴⁰⁹ Consequently, the Joseon history of thought has been evaluated by the sole criterion of modernity.⁴¹⁰ Modernity theory has generated misleading half-truths and the classification of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak stands at the heart of the matter. Therefore, this chapter asks a more fundamental question: Is the classification of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak on the issue of modernity appropriate?

It is necessary to start with a discussions of the term (and examples of) Silhak itself. First, Silhak is a notion found and formed by a number of Korean nationalist historians.

⁴⁰⁸ Kim, Yeongmin, "Geundaeseong-gwa Hangukhak," 121–122.

⁴⁰⁹ Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions*, 9–10.

⁴¹⁰ Kim, Yeongmin, "Geundaeseong-gwa Hangukhak," 123.

Silhak is now used as a term to group together a number of scholars of the Joseon dynasty who had interests in real learning. However, it will be useful to devote attention to the issues that Kalton points out: these men, Silhak scholars, never saw themselves as a unique group or movement united under the rubric “Silhak” – or, for that matter, under any other rubric.⁴¹¹ Actually, one might need to reconsider whether these men thought of themselves as a single group or not. When historians find any commonality among them, it is historians who categorize them as a group. The more important matter is this; whether this group united under the rubric “Silhak” had any commonality or not. A number of subgroups, formed on the basis of friendship, blood and martial relationships, or master–disciple bonds and so forth did exist, but it is hard to find a certain academic characteristic to bind them together under the umbrella of Silhak.⁴¹² There are, today, more than a hundred scholars considered as Silhak scholars and the time span of Silhak is about three hundred years, running from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, but, interestingly, there are no obvious generally agreed common features between them.⁴¹³

To begin with, ‘Silhak’ was used in a different sense in former times. It can even be traced back to the early Sung dynasty (宋, 960–1279) in China. In the early stage of the new dynasty, there was an expansion of the civil service examination, a relatively open channel for official recruitment, heightened demands for education and an increasing attention to the need for schools. Buddhism could not meet this educational requirement. Neo-Confucianism was born as ‘Silhak’, practical learning, to refute the existing Buddhism. The paradigmatic teacher in the early Sung was Hu Yuan (胡瑗, 993–1059), whose school was acclaimed as a model for the education of officials through a

⁴¹¹ Kalton, “An Introduction to Silhak,” 30.

⁴¹² Kalton, “An Introduction to Silhak,” 30.

⁴¹³ Han, Yeongwoo, “Silhakyongueyi Eojewa Oneul,” 5.

combination of classical studies and practical learning. It consisted of civil administration, military affairs, hydraulic engineering and mathematics.⁴¹⁴

Silhak was also used in a commonplace sense in the Joseon dynasty. The Neo-Confucianism of the early Joseon dynasty was believed to be Silhak, and the main opponent of that was also Buddhism. However, the meaning and opponents of Silhak changed in the mid-Joseon dynasty, in the seventeenth century. Han Woo-geun found the term ‘Silhak’ used frequently in Yun Jeung’s (尹拯, 1629–1714) writings. Yun Jeung said that the greatest corruptions of the age was that scholars devoted themselves only to literary artifice not to real affairs (實事) but – according to Han’s analysis – Yun’s uses of ‘real’ were not a call to devote attention to economic or administrative concerns, but rather a traditional Confucian summons to get back to the real business of cultivating virtue. Interestingly, Yun even seems to contrast Silhak with other kinds of learning, such as geography, law and astronomy. According to Yun, these subjects cannot constitute ‘real learning’ (實學), and he considers it a mistake to spend much time on them.⁴¹⁵ In a word, the notion of Silhak (practical learning) was not formed yet.

What is more, there are other examples of Silhak having a different meaning in the *Sillok*. King (Sejong) asked, “What about the law of *Immungogang*?” (臨文考講; a kind of oral test) Jeong Cho answered, “If an examiner asks a meaning beyond words and the applicant can answer it, it is Silhak.”⁴¹⁶ Another similar usage can be also found in King Sejong’s records. According to these examples, the meaning of Silhak was the

⁴¹⁴ Bary, *East Asian Civilization*, 47.

⁴¹⁵ Han, Yeongwoo, “Silhakyongueyi Eojewa Oneul,” 19–20.

⁴¹⁶ *Sejong Sillok*, 1419. 2. 17. 2.

preparation for the oral test.⁴¹⁷ There were mainly two kinds of tests in the early Joseon. The first was to test the applicant's memory of famous sentences or articles and the other was an oral test to examine the interpretation or explanation of original texts. The first test is called *sajang* (詞章) and the second *gyeonghak* (經學). Therefore a test for interpretation – not just memory – was considered as Silhak, real learning. Silhak had been used as a common noun up until the Joseon.

In the twentieth century, however, Silhak was found and used as a proper noun for an academic term. The first scholar to group the members into a larger unit, which would be titled as the 'School of Silhak' (實學派), was Jang Jiyeon. In fact, it was not an exclusive research on Silhak as clearly shown in the title of his work, *Joseon Yugyo Yeonwon* (A History of Joseon Neo-Confucianism). When he studied Korean Confucianism he categorized a certain group as followers of the School of Han Learning, which arose in the Qing dynasty. He did group them but did not use the term 'Silhak' yet.⁴¹⁸

The first use of the term, 'Silhak,' was in 1934, which was the preparation of the 99th anniversary of Dasan Jeong Yakyong's death. A school of nationalist Korean scholars, Jeong Inbo, Moon Ilpyeong and An Jaehong, began using the term. They developed a Korean studies movement after Dasan's memorial business. Therefore, Silhak and Korean studies have been very closely related with each other from the beginning, and studies of Dasan Jeong Yakyong were the main issue in Korean studies.⁴¹⁹ Korean nationalist historians emphasized that Silhak is the seed of modernity as well as an

⁴¹⁷ *Sejong Sillok*, 1430. 8. 13. 1.

⁴¹⁸ Jang, Jiyeon and Yu, Jeongdong trs. *Joseon Yugyo Yeonwon* (Seoul: Samseongmunhwamungo, 1979)

⁴¹⁹ Han, Yeongwoo, "Silhakyongueui Eojewa Oneul," 26.

internal energy. However, there were inverse researches by Japanese imperial historians. Fuzitsuka said that the School of Evidential Scholarship (考證學派) was introduced from Qing to Joseon, and it stimulated the birth of Silhak as an external stimulus. Yamaguchi emphasized the role of Western Learning (西學) as an external stimulus.⁴²⁰ However, both sides, Korean nationalists and Japanese imperialists, admitted that Silhak is something new and distinct from Neo-Confucianism. The only difference between them is whether Silhak is an autogenous and internal energy or not.

In the wake of national liberation on August 15, 1945, research on Silhak underwent a new phase with the earnest start of research on Korean history. Cheon Gwanwoo, Hong Iseop and Han Wooguen tried to study Silhak as a whole. Cheon presented “Bangye Yu Hyeongwon Yeongu” (A Research of Bangye Yu Hyeongwon) in 1952. Cheon said in his paper that “it goes without saying that this ‘sil’ (實) is the ‘sil’ of ‘real correction’ (實正), which indicates its free nature, the ‘sil’ of ‘real evidence’ (實證), which indicates its scientific nature, the ‘sil’ of ‘real use’ (實用), which indicates its practical nature.” He schematized the development of Silhak into three periods, The Preparation Period (1550–1650), the Development Period (1650–1750) and the Flourishing Period (1750–1850). According to Cheon, Kim Yuk (金堉, 1580–1658) and Yi Sugwang (李睟光, 1563–1627) are pioneers of Silhak, and Silhak began in the seventeenth century, which is the Preparation Period. In the Development Period, two leading Silhak figures, Yu Hyeongwon (柳馨遠, 1622–1673) and Yi Ik (李瀼, 1681–1763), founded Silhak. During the Flourishing Period, Silhak became the dominant current of the intellectual life of the time. The movement came to fruition in a burst of creative accomplishment in a wide

⁴²⁰ Chong, Cha’ng Yol, “Disputes and Tasks in Research on the Thought of Silhak,” 6.

variety of fields, including classical studies, natural science, Korean literature, geography and history. Cheon's research focused on one scholar, Yu Hyeongwon, but he enlarged the period and made Silhak a mainstream facet of the late Joseon.⁴²¹ However, he could not overcome the existing theory, the dichotomy of traditional and modern society. It will be useful to give attention to what Han points out: it was assumed that Silhak movement was lively, whereas Neo-Confucianism disturbed this internal energy, especially during the Flourishing Period.⁴²²

According to Cheon, Silhak and Neo-Confucianism counterbalanced each other, but Han Woogeun directly opposed Cheon's theory. Han presented "Ijo Silhakeui Gaenyeome Daehayeo" (About the Concept of Silhak in the Yi dynasty). According to Han, the term 'Silhak' is not that common and is rarely found even in the works of those men who are now viewed as members of the so-called 'Silhakpa' (實學派) or 'School of Practical Learning,' as it is often translated. He found that Neo-Confucianism was called Silhak at that time, as mentioned above. It was a shock to the Korean historical profession and the status of Silhak as a proper noun was also shaken.⁴²³ Therefore, Han suggested 'Administration and Practical Usage Learning' (經世致用學) as a new term. However, the term, 'Administration and Practical Usage', is both more common and abstract than Silhak.⁴²⁴

When these two theories, Cheon's and Han's, stood face to face, Yi Wooseong proposed a new framework to understand Silhak. Yi attempted to distinguish the major schools or types of thought within Silhak, arrange them periodically, and tie them in with the socio-

⁴²¹ Cheon, Gwanwoo, "Bangye Yu Hyeongwon Yeongu."

⁴²² Han, Yeongwoo, "Silhakyongueui Eojewa Oneul," 30-31.

⁴²³ Han, Woogeun, "Ijo Silhakeui Gaenyeome Daehayeo."

⁴²⁴ Han, Yeongwoo, "Silhakyongueui Eojewa Oneul," 33-34.

economic developments of each period. He even traced Silhak back to Yulgok Yi I.⁴²⁵ Yi Wooseong schematized the development of Silhak into three stages. The School of Administration and Practical Usage (經世致用派) in the first half of the eighteenth century, the School of Profitable Usage and Benefiting the People (利用厚生派) in the second half of the eighteenth century and the School of Seeking Evidence (實事求是派) in the nineteenth century. The School of Administration and Practical Usage was founded by Yi Ik and concerned various types of institutional reform, especially the land system and government organization. The School of Profitable Usage and Benefiting the People was centred around Park Jiwon (朴趾源, 1737–1805) and concentrated on technological reform, especially the development of commerce and industry, a greater circulation of goods and increased productivity. The School of Seeking Evidence appeared with Kim Jeongheui (金正喜, 1786–1856). This methodological thrust became a school in itself, concentrating on more purely intellectual subjects such as the classics, epigraphy, and so forth.⁴²⁶ However, these three stages or terms are not opposing notions and can be seen as duplicative of each other. In addition, these terms are also abstract and ahistorical.⁴²⁷

Under these circumstances, the interest in Silhak dramatically decreased because of the Park Jeongheui government's radical modernization policy and resistance to it after the 1970s. Instead of Silhak, considered as the seed of modernity, Neo-Confucianism became a new topic of Korean historiography. The comprehensive research of Neo-Confucianism began, and it concerned various disciplines, such as politics, economics, sociology and the history of thought, science, literature, music, art, and so forth. The

⁴²⁵ Yi, Wooseong, "Silhak Yeongu Seonseol," 5–6.

⁴²⁶ Yi, Wooseong, "Silhak Yeongu Seonseol," 12–13.

⁴²⁷ Han, Yeongwoo, "Silhakyongueui Eojewa Oneul," 35–36.

results of Neo-Confucian studies were remarkable. They found that Neo-Confucianism was also affirmative and progressive, and not much different from those of Silhak.⁴²⁸ Consequently, Silhak was worthy of discussion again.

Ji Duhwan's research reflected the achievement of Neo-Confucianism studies in the 1970s. His conception of Silhak was different from previous interpretations. In the first place, Ji verified that Silhak meant a kind of oral test or interview in Joseon, as mentioned above. Furthermore, Ji asserted that only the School of Northern Studies (北學) was modern-oriented and true Silhak, and presented five reasons: Firstly, in philosophy only the School of Northern Studies overcame Neo-Confucianist concerns with *li* (理); Secondly, in history they overcame Sino-centrism (中華思想); Thirdly, in economics they overcame the existing relationship of landlords and tenants based on social rank system; Fourthly, they accepted the theory of the School of Evidential Scholarship (考證學派) and intended authenticity; Lastly, their novels had new interests ranging beyond Neo-Confucianism. Even though Neo-Confucian scholars had written novels in Korean characters, not in Chinese characters, it was based on Neo-Confucianism.⁴²⁹ However, Ji's works also had its limits. He still used the dichotomy between the middle feudal and modern age.⁴³⁰ However, the Joseon dynasty was not feudal, but a centralized monarchy.

In the last 60 years, from Jang Jiyeon to Ji Duhwan, Silhak was discovered and shaped, but its rhetoric has always been based on the dichotomy of modernity and its opposite. By the criterion of modernity most scholars in the Joseon dynasty, especially the late

⁴²⁸ Han, Yeongwoo, "Silhakyongueui Eojewa Oneul," 37.

⁴²⁹ Ji, Duhwan, *Joseonsidae Sasangsaewi Jaejomyeong*, 270–291.

⁴³⁰ Han, Yeongwoo, "Silhakyongueui Eojewa Oneul," 38–40.

Joseon, might be divided into two groups, Neo-Confucians and Silhakpa. From the 1990s onwards, fortunately, there were more reflective researches on Silhak, and which have used a variety of approaches. Jeong Hohun analyzes Silhak scholars' political factions and their family or kin.⁴³¹ Yu Bonghak asserts that the question of where those Silhak scholars were from is important.⁴³² At the same time, comparative research between China, Japan and Korea began to appear.⁴³³ Nevertheless, it is still doubtful whether the classification of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak based on the notion of modernity is appropriate or not.

6.2. Classification of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak

In this section, the conventional classification that suggests that Silhak is entirely distinct from Neo-Confucianism will be scrutinized. Joseon factional lineage would be a good reference point.

It is widely recognized that factionalism (朋黨政治) had a profound impact on the politics of the mid-late Joseon. Furthermore, nearly all the outstanding thinkers of this period belonged to factions representing the political opposition. In spite of this, very little work has been done on the relationship between intellectual trends and factional associations. In addition, without exception, all the figures traditionally associated with Silhak were involved in factionalism.⁴³⁴ Therefore the study of the lineage of Silhak scholars through factionalism is needed, and this chronological approach is rather

⁴³¹ Jeong, Hohun. "17segi Silhakeui Hyeongseonggwa Geu Jeongchi Sasang, 63–88.

⁴³² Yu, Bonghak, "Joseon Hugi Gyeongwasajokeui Daeduwa Silhak," 95–123.

⁴³³ Yi, Sangok., "Cheongdae Gojeunghak I-ipe Gwanhan Yeongu," 123-143.

⁴³⁴ Setton, *Chong Yagyong*, 9.

complex but can show various links between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak.

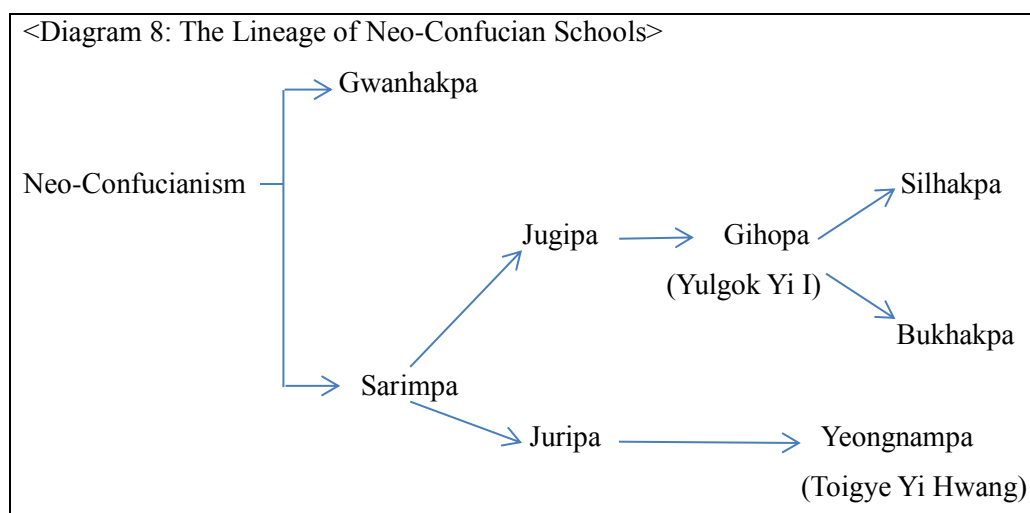
At the end of the Goryeo dynasty, two groups of Neo-Confucian scholars emerged. One group was concerned with administrative matters and the other with metaphysical concerns. The first group is called *Gwanhakpa* (官學派) and the second one *Sarimpa* (士林派).⁴³⁵ The *Gwanhakpa* helped to establish the new dynasty, Joseon, and the *Sarimpa* resisted until the end of Koryeo and hid in mountains after the founding of the Joseon dynasty. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the usurpation of the throne by King Sejo brought to prominence the second major party, the *Sarimpa*. In spite of the Literati Purges, the *Sarimpa* finally defeated the *Gwanhakpa* and gained power. After the *Gwanhakpa* disappeared, political conflicts among the *Sarimpa* were based on disputes within Neo-Confucian philosophy. The intellectual field continued to be dominated only by the descendants of the *Sarimpa*, who by the mid-sixteenth century had split into two distinct schools of dualist philosophy, the *Juripa* (主理派, Principle First School) and the *Jugipa* (主氣派, Matter First School). The *Juripa* are known as the Westerners (西人) and the *Jugipa* as the Easterners (東人). The Easterners, following their victory, divided into the Northerners (北人) and the Southerners (南人), of which the Northerners emerged victorious. The Westerners split up into the *Noron* (老論) and the *Soron* (小論) factions. The *Noron* became the mainstream during the late Joseon dynasty.⁴³⁶

The *Juripa* was so strongly influenced by Toegye Yi Hwang (退溪 李滉, 1501–1570)

⁴³⁵ The term, *Gwanhakpa* (官學派) and *Sarimpa* (士林派) is still controversial word. It was already dealt with in chapter 1. However, this chapter follows existing examples in conformity with the established usage and references.

⁴³⁶ Grayson, *Korea – A Religious History*, 111–115.

that it is often referred to as *Toegyeohak* (Toegye Philosophy). He is a giant figure in the history of philosophy of Korea and is often portrayed as Korea's Zhu Xi. However, Yi Hwang's philosophy ran counter to another trend in Neo-Confucianism and led to a famous series of debates, the Four-Seven Debates (四端七情論)⁴³⁷ between him and one of his followers, Gi Daeseung (奇大升, 1527–1572). While Yi saw *Li* (principle) as a transcendent, primary force, Gi saw *Li* as one of the factors involved in *Gi* (material force). The first scholar of the *Jugipa* was Gi Daeseung, but the more famous scholar of the *Juripa* is Yi I. Fundamentally, Yi I looked to *Gi* rather than *Li*. Their approach emphasized looking outwards rather than inwards, an intellectual rather than spiritual assumption, and so they valued external experience and breadth of learning.⁴³⁸ It seems apparent that Silhak is derived from *Jugipa*.



Silhakpa's practical interests may be similar to the *Jugipa*'s emphasis on material force.

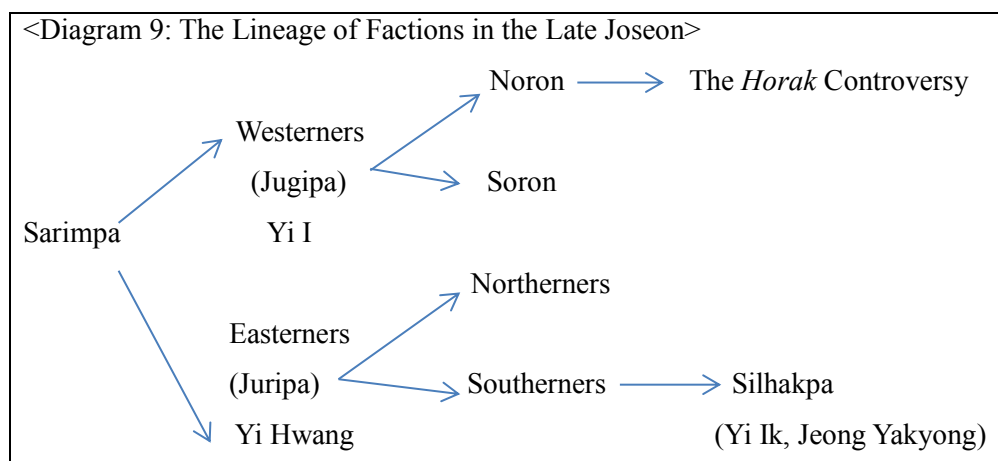
Grayson says that in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries *Jugipa* gave rise to the

⁴³⁷ For Yi Hwang, the beginnings of the four cardinal virtues (四端: humanity (仁), justice (義), civility (禮), wisdom (智)) are generated by *yi* (理(ch.), Principle (理)), while the seven sentiments of human emotion (七情: joy (喜), rage (怒), grief (哀), anxiety (懼), love (愛), hatefulness (惡), desire (欲)) are generated by *gi* (氣(ch.), Material Force (氣)). He further believed that *yi* was the fundamental, which led or directed *gi*. For this reason the school was called the *Juripa*.

⁴³⁸ Eckert, *Korea Old and New*, 151–152.

School of Northern Learning (北學派) which, more so than Silhakpa, was concerned with the technical and scientific aspects of social development.⁴³⁹ Furthermore, he argues that there is a straight line of descent from the *Jugipa* of the sixteenth century to the Silhakpa of the seventeenth and eighteenth century (see Diagram 8).⁴⁴⁰

This assertion that Silhakpa is from the *Jugipa* is broadly accepted, and it is more developed than the existing theory that Silhak is totally different from Neo-Confucianism. Until the 1970s the sharp classification that Neo-Confucianism is ‘a dead discipline’ and Silhak is ‘a practical and living discipline’ was included in the Korean national history textbook.⁴⁴¹ Under these circumstances, Grayson argues that Silhak is from one of the branches of Neo-Confucianism. However, the matter of intellectual lineage of the Joseon is not that simple. If one scrutinizes the lineage of political factions of the late Joseon, one will find a different answer from Grayson’s (see below Diagram 9).⁴⁴²



⁴³⁹ Grayson, *Korea – A Religious History*, 119.

⁴⁴⁰ Grayson, *Korea – A Religious History*, 134.

⁴⁴¹ Jeong, Jaejeong, “Joseon Hugi Silhakyeongueui Donghyanggwa “Guksa” Gyogwaseo Seosuleui Byeoncheon,” 256.

⁴⁴² Yu, Bonghak, *Joseonhugi Hakgyewa Jisikin*, 36, 48.

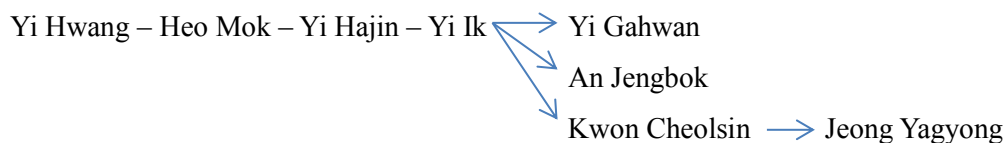
Two prominent Silhak scholars, Yi Ik and Jeong Yakyong, are from the Southerners, the sub-fraction of the *Juripa*, Yi Hwang's school. It was generally believed that most Silhak scholars were from the Southerners, but their origins were not that simple. The followers of Yi Hwang made the Southerners after the Westerners defeated the Easterners. The Southerners, together with the Northerners, came into being in 1591 as a result of a split within their parent faction, the Easterners, over the issue of succession to the throne of King Seonjo. King Seonjo had no legitimate son, and Jeong Cheol (鄭澈, 1536–1593), a leading member of the Westerners, proposed that a son by one of King Seonjo's concubines should succeed to the throne. The rival faction of the Westerners, the Easterners, consequently split into two sub-factions, the Northerners, who urged the King to strongly denounce the proposal and deal harshly with its supporters, and the Southerners, who took a conciliatory position. It was the Northerners who had their way, and they succeeded in replacing the Westerners as the dominant faction when Gwanhaegun, who they had supported, took the throne. However, after Gwanhaegun, they were ousted by the Westerners, who dominated the political scene for most of the period after. Through the Ritual Controversy from 1659 and 1674, the Southerners managed to wrest power from the *Noron*, a sub-faction of the Westerners, for two brief periods during the reign of King Sukjong. However, following two centuries, from 1694 until 1863, the Southerners generally remained in opposition with little or no representation in government.⁴⁴³

If one takes a glance at the characteristics of the *Juripa* and the *Jugipa*, one would guess that Silhak is from the *Jugipa*, but the majority of Silhak thinkers were from the Southerners, a branch of the *Juripa*. It is, of course, still debatable. In a word,

⁴⁴³ Setton, *Chong Yagyong*, 25–26.

In fact, the lineage of Joseon factions was more complex than expected. Other prominent Silhak scholars, such as Hong Daeyong (洪大容, 1731–1783), Park Jiwon and Kim Jeonghi, were from the *Noron*, a branch of the *Jugipa*. According to Jeong's analysis, Yu Hyeongwon was born into a Northern family but played an active role as the Southerners. Han Baek-gyeom (韓百謙, 1552–1615) and Yi Su-gwang were also Northerner-Southerners (北人系 南人).⁴⁴⁴ From the point of view of factional lineage, the school of Silhak mixed various scholars from the Westerners, Southerners, Northerners, and so forth. No one can say that Silhak is from one certain faction, but, interestingly, most Silhak scholars were from the lineage of Neo-Confucian factions whether they were Westerners or Easterners. It means they were evaluated as Neo-Confucian scholars at that time and this is an important link between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak. The conventional theory that Silhak was entirely different from Neo-Confucianism is apparently wrong according to the lineage of Neo-Confucian factions.

<Diagram 10: The Lineage of the Southerners>



445 Yu, Bonghak, *Joseonhugi Hakgyewa Jisikin*, 36.

According to Yu's research, Yi Ik, who is believed to be a prominent Silhak scholar, was considered as a legitimate Southerner. This lineage had been generally accepted from the eighteenth century onwards. Yi Ik, who is categorized as a Silhak scholar, was believed to be the leaders of the Southerners at that time.⁴⁴⁶ It means Yi Ik's thought, which is called Silhak now, was not heterodox to contemporary Neo-Confucians at the time. From Yi Sugwang to Jeong Yakyong, most Silhak scholars were considered to be Neo-Confucian scholars and they thought of themselves as such. The lineage of Neo-Confucianism, not only Westerners but also Easterners, can prove this point. The existing distinction theory based on the notion of modernity that suggests that Silhak is different from Neo-Confucianism is at least untrue for them, whether they are termed Silhak scholars or Neo-Confucians by historians. In addition, it seems that Silhak is a kind of answer for the needs of the late Joseon but one that is outside the boundaries of specific factions.

In conclusion, we have studied several links between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak from the point of view of Neo-Confucianism's factional lineage. Most Silhak scholars were found in the lineage of Neo-Confucian factions, and they were evaluated as Neo-Confucian scholars at the time. What is more, they were not just members but the leaders of Neo-Confucian society during the period. Silhak thought was neither heterodox nor something new but one of the fruits of Neo-Confucianism, at least to contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars. Now it is good time to deal with another misconception of Silhak.

⁴⁴⁶ Yu, Bonghak, *Joseonhugi Hakgyewa Jisikin*, 35–37.

6.3. Retrenchment of Silhak: ‘Failed’ Dream

The stress on the failure of Silhak scholars has led to some misunderstandings; that they were from ruined clans, out of office, of little influence and underestimated at that time. This section will question whether Silhak scholars were really from poor families, if they lacked careers and whether they had a considerable influence or not.

It would be good to start from Silhak scholars’ family background. Yi Woosong argued that most Silhak scholars were from ruined *yangban* (兩班).⁴⁴⁷ Yi Ik was born to the Yeosu (驪州) Yi (李) family. His father, Hajin, who had previously served in the elevated position of Inspector-General (大司憲), was exiled to a remote area of Pyeongan province after the Southerners were expelled from power in 1680. His father died shortly after Yi Ik was born. His elder brother, Jam, was a teacher like his father, but he also became a victim of the factional struggle. Jeong Yakyong was also from the Southerners so his family history is not much different from Yi Ik’s story. He was the fourth son of Jeong Jaewon, who had served a lengthy stint as magistrate of Jinju County. Jeong was not born into the higher echelons of the ruling elite. However, Jeong Siyun (丁時潤, 1646–1713), five generations prior to Jeong Yakyong, and his second son Jeong Dobok (丁道復, 1666–1720) were the last of the family line prior to Jeong Yakyong’s father to serve in public office.⁴⁴⁸ Due to the exclusion of their faction, the Southerners, from senior positions in government after their fall from power in 1694, it is said that Yi Ik and Jeong Yakyong were from a ruined clan.

⁴⁴⁷ Yi, Woosong, “Silhak Yeongu Seoseol.”

⁴⁴⁸ Setton, *Chong Yagyong*, 53–54.

However, the cases of Hong Daeyong and Park Jiwon, who are called the ‘School of Northern Learning’ (北學派), tell a different story. They were from the *Noron*, which had substantial political power at that time. Hong Daeyong was born in the Namyang (南陽) Hong (洪) clan. His grandfather, Yongjo, held the elevated position of Censor-General (大司諫). His father, Yeok, was a provincial governor, and his father gave him an opportunity to see Qing by himself. Park Jiwon was from the Bannam (潘南) Park (朴) clan, which was famous for fine writers. Hong and Park were from the *Noron*, which had argued for the Northern Campaign (北伐論: a campaign to attack on Qing to revenge Ming) more than a hundred years before. After the late eighteenth century, however, the assertion that Joseon should accept Qing’s developed culture began to appear in the inner circle of the *Noron* faction. Interestingly, the contradictory assertion, ‘Northern Learning’ (北學: an academic school to learn Qing’s developed culture) and the Northern Campaign argument, began to be accepted without firm rejection by leading scholars, who were from the distinguished clans of the *Noron*. Their fathers insisted on the Northern Campaign, but they were sent as ambassadors or as their assistants to Qing and saw Qing’s developed culture. They found limitations in the Northern Campaign and wanted to overcome it. Most scholars who insisted on the Northern Learning had visited Qing more than once, and this opportunity was given mainly to young people from influential families, usually *Noron*.⁴⁴⁹

In brief, the Southerners lost their political position between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yi Ik and Jeong Yak-yong were from the Southerners so their fathers were expelled from the Joseon court, or just served at provincial government

⁴⁴⁹ Jeong, Okja, “Joseonhugieui Munpunggwa Jingyeongsimunhak,” 70.

posts. In contrast Northerners such as Hong Dayong and Park Jiwon could go to Qing due to their faction's power. As one cannot say Silhak is from a certain faction, one cannot assert that Silhak scholars are from the ruined clans.

Secondly, Korean nationalist historians emphasize that Silhak scholars were out of office and had less influence. The reason to emphasize their poor careers and lesser influence is to explain their failures. It means that if they were in office and had more influence, they could modernize Joseon. Their careers and influence require systematic examination.

There are two famous proofs of their belief. Yu Hyeongwon made two brief but desultory attempts at the civil service examinations, but he gave up on the prospect of an official career and chose to spend the rest of his life in scholarly contemplation and writing.⁴⁵⁰ Yi Ik underwent an irregularly held test for the Higher Civil Service Examination (大科) in 1705, but an error in listing the names of applicants served him up the bitter cup of failure. However, hearing his fame, the royal court offered Yi a position in the Ministry of Industry in 1727, but he declined to accept it.⁴⁵¹

That said it is too early to judge it. The life of the Hermit Scholar (隱士) was believed to be one of the ideals of Neo-Confucians and there were a great number of prominent Hermit Scholars in Joseon. Gil Jae (吉再, 1353–1419) was a member of *Seonggyungwan* from the Goryeo dynasty, but he refused to accept the post in the new dynasty, Joseon, following the Confucian teaching, “忠臣不事二君” (A loyalist

⁴⁵⁰ Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institution*, 4–5.

⁴⁵¹ Song, Chu-yong, “Practical Learning of Yi Ik,” 30.

never serves two kings). He fled to his hometown and hid in the mountains. Local legend says that his disciples would come secretly to bring food to their master. He was extolled as the intellectual ancestor of the *Sarimpa*.⁴⁵² The tradition of Gil Jae had influence throughout the Joseon dynasty. Interestingly, Yi Sugwang and his colleagues, who formed the early stage of Silhak scholarship, called themselves *Sieun* (市隱), which means “Hermit Scholar in a city”.⁴⁵³ Yu Hyeongwon and Yi Ik also refused to accept an official post, but it cannot be said that they were inferior or less influential. They also seemed to choose the Confucian ideal life as a Hermit Scholar. Jeong Yak-yong also said in a letter to his sons, “A wise scholar is born under poverty and solitude, and political affairs do harm scholars’ researches.”⁴⁵⁴ In the end, some Silhak scholars’ careers could not prevent their research or influence.

What is more, other Silhak scholars – unlike Yu Hyeongwon and Yi Ik – were in office, and a great number of them were in the high ranks of the bureaucracy. Yi Sugwang, who has been portrayed as the originator of Silhak, held the elevated position of Censor-General (大司諫). Park Sedang (朴世堂, 1629–1703) also passed the civil examination at the first grade and had been to Qing as an ambassador. In addition Yu Deukgong, Yi Deokmu, Park Jega and Seo Isu were famous as the four clerks (四檢書) of *Gyujanggak* (奎章閣: National Research Library). Their ranks were low but it was at the centre of government that they studied policy during King Jeongjo’s reign.⁴⁵⁵ It is a well-known fact that Jeong Yak-yong won King Jeongjo’s favour as well. Jeong was appointed to the position of lecturer at the *Seonggyungwan*

⁴⁵² Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, 102–114.

⁴⁵³ Han, Yeongwoo, “Silhak Yeongueui Eojeowa Oneul,” 50.

⁴⁵⁴ Yi, Deokil, *Jeong Yak-yong-gwa Geueui Hyeongjedeul* Vol. 2, 135.

⁴⁵⁵ Jeong, Hohun, “17segi Silhakeui Hyeongseong-gwa Geu Jeongchi Sasang,” 76–77.

(成均館: National College).⁴⁵⁶ Jeong was also a main figure in constructing King Jeongjo's dream city, Hwaseong (華城).⁴⁵⁷ In a word, Silhak scholars were more in office than out of it.

The influence of Silhak scholars at that time was higher than expected. Yu Hyeongwon gave up on the prospect of an official career and spent his last twenty years in scholarly contemplation and writing from his thirties onwards. Palais says that Yu's magnum opus, the *Bangyesurok* (潘溪隨錄, 1670) was not well known while he was alive.⁴⁵⁸ In addition, the *Bangyesurok* was recommended to King Sukjong in 1678 but could not get the King's interest, which Palais attests to.⁴⁵⁹ Yes, it failed to get King's interest, but it should be checked again. First, Yu's book was completed just three years before Yu died in 1673. Furthermore, it was presented to King Sukjong just eight years after its publication and five years after Yu's death. It means that the *Bangyesurok* was already read by contemporary scholars and even recommended to the king. In 1741, a former royal secretary, Yang Deukjung (梁得中, 1665–1742) recommended the *Bangyesurok* be taught at the Royal Lectures (經筵).⁴⁶⁰ Gwon Jeok (權穉, 1675–1755) also praised it as the best statecraft (經國策) after *Samdae* (三代; 夏, 殷, 周), and recommended its publication in 1750.⁴⁶¹ Besides this, Hong Daeyong introduced it as one of the representative texts of Joseon statecraft to Chinese scholars in 1765.⁴⁶² The extreme example is King Yongjo saying

⁴⁵⁶ Setton, *Chong Yagong*, 58–64.

⁴⁵⁷ Jo, Seongsan, *Joseonhugi Nakrongye Hakpungeui Hyeongseonggwa Jeongae*, 174–203.

⁴⁵⁸ Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions*, 8.

⁴⁵⁹ *Sukjong Sillok*, 1678. 6. 20. 1; Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions*, 8.

⁴⁶⁰ *Yeongjo Sillok*, 1741. 2. 23. 3.

⁴⁶¹ *Yeongjo Sillok*, 1750. 6. 19. 3.

⁴⁶² Ko, Donghwan, "Joseonhugi Dosigyeongjeeui Seongjanggwa Jisikseggyeeui Hwakdae," 269.

that an official not reading it was unfaithful.⁴⁶³ In a word, Yu's influences were rather far-reaching.

Yi Ik also refused to accept an official post, but he was been regarded as a major figure. The strong intellectual links between all of these Southern figures are revealed by Kwon Cheolsin in the following remark, quoted by Jeong Yakyong: "After Yi Hwang, the scholarship of Yun Hyu excelled, and after Yun, the scholarship of Yi Ik passed on this inherited wisdom."⁴⁶⁴ Yi formed his school, Seonghohakpa (星湖學派), and influenced his disciples, especially Jeong Yakyong. Yi Ik's influence cannot be exaggerated.

It is easy to get Jeong Yakyong's influence. A king's secret envoy, Sim Yeongseok (沈英錫, 1767-?), reproduced an account of obnoxious customs concerning the exchange of grain in Jeong's book, *Mokminsimseo* (牧民心書: Reflections on Fostering the People, printed in 1818) in 1822. There were already a great number of books quoting Jeong's works in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1822, *Heumheumsinseo* (欽欽新書: New Treatise on the Legal System, printed in 1819) was published and it was republished in five booklets for convenience.⁴⁶⁵

In brief, several prominent Silhak scholars, Yu Hyeongwon, Yi Ik and Jeong Yakyong, were Southerners, so their fathers died or were expelled from the Joseon court as scapegoats. However, other scholars from the *Noron*, like Hong Daeyong and Park Jiwon, were from privileged clans. In addition, except for Yu Hyeongwon

⁴⁶³ *Seungjeongwonilgi*, 1756. 1. 21.

⁴⁶⁴ Setton, *Chong Yagyong*, 50.

⁴⁶⁵ Ko, Donghwan, "Joseonhugi Dosigyeongjeeui Seongjanggwa Jisikseggyeui Hwakdae," 271.

and Yi Ik, most Silhak scholars were in office. Although Yu and Yi refused to accept an official career, their influence was considerable. Jeong Yakong was in office and his influence was not less than the two prominent figures. Consequently, Silhak scholars' careers or evaluations of their influences cannot be underestimated. In a word, they did not fail.

6.4. Rhetorical Flourish of Silhak: Failed 'Dream'

The 'dream' aspect, outlined in the introduction, relates to the rhetoric of nationalism. Cheon Gwanwoo also says that nationalism is one of the major criteria in dividing Neo-Confucianism and Silhak.⁴⁶⁶ It is generally believed that nationalism is closely related with history. Hobsbawm's edited book, *The Invention of Tradition*, in particular, stimulated historians to study the relationship between nationalism and history, especially ancient history.⁴⁶⁷ This section will deal with some Silhak scholars' historiography, especially as related to ancient history. Therefore, the rhetoric of national identity around ancient Korea will be studied and Neo-Confucian and Silhak historiography is also compared.

Nationalism – or national identity – has always been formed through interaction with an external antagonist. Korean identity was affected by China for a long time before Japanese imperialism. While positively accepting Chinese culture by strengthening friendly ties with China, the Korean government, both Goryeo and Joseon, sought to enhance the spirit of national identity. It was the pursuit of harmony between the

⁴⁶⁶ Cheon, Gwanwoo, "Bangye Yu Hyeongwon Yeongu 1," 9–12.

⁴⁶⁷ Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 42.

poles of internationalism and nationalism.⁴⁶⁸ The most representative case on national identity is the rhetoric of Dangun (檀君) and Gija (Chi Tzu (ch.), 箕子). This issue has a long history, and the question of who is the father of Korea (國祖) was a sort of war by proxy between Sino-centrism and nationalism.

Gija is at the heart of the issue, as Dangun is a kind of domestic matter, but Gija is also an international issue closely related with China. The case of Gija is based mainly on Chinese written sources although Korean archaeologists have been trying to find data for Gija.⁴⁶⁹ The inherent ambiguity of ancient historical archaeological data paradoxically strengthens a national myth related to national identity, thus enhancing its potential to flourish.⁴⁷⁰

The first source dealing with Gija is the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (後漢書). “...基俗多淫祀 事靈 星神 日神 可汗神 箕子神...”⁴⁷¹ Gija was worshipped like the Sun, the Stars and Gagan, as a deity by the Goguryeo people. The most important phrase is “淫祀” (eumsa (kr.), yin-ssu(ch.), deity worship), which was, of course, heathen from the Confucian viewpoint. The “可汗” (Gagan) seems to indicate Jumong, the founder of Goguryeo. Gija was worshiped as an ancestral deity rather than as a Confucian sage. Following Goguryeo’s transfer of its capital to Pyeongyang, the Gija deity is believed to have become a part of the national set of

⁴⁶⁸ Han, Yeongwoo, “Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties,” 363.

⁴⁶⁹ Researches of Gija are based only on Chinese written sources such as the *Analects* (論語), the *Document* (書經), the *Changes* (周易), the *Tso Commentary* (左傳), the *Record of the Grand Historian* (史記), the *History of the Han Dynasty* (漢書), the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (後漢書), the *Memorable Events of the Wei Dynasty* (魏略), the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (三國志) and so forth.

⁴⁷⁰ Kohl and Fawcett, “Archaeology in the Service of the State,” 13.

⁴⁷¹ recited in Han, Yeongwoo, “Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties,” 21.

Goguryeo beliefs. During the Unified Silla period, however, there is no mention of Gija worship, because it seems Pyeongyang was at best a peripheral concern of the Unified Silla court.⁴⁷²

Gija became an object of interest with the founding of the new dynasty, Goryeo. That King Taejo (太祖, 918–943), the founder of Goryeo claimed to be Goguryeo's successor is apparent in the name of the dynasty he adopted. At this time, the Chinese portrayed Gija as a Chinese feudal lord and as an individual who helped to civilize Korea. The image of Gija went through a drastic transformation in the *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* (三國史記) compiled by a Confucian scholar Kim Busik (金富軾, 1075–1151). The preface of the *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* says that “there had been a state for a long time and Gija was enfeoffed by the Chou court (...海東有國家久矣 自箕子受封於周室...).”⁴⁷³ Then Kim added his opinion at the end of the chapter on Goguryeo. It is said that Gija taught the people decorum, farming and sericulture, and instituted the Eight Prohibitive Injunctions (...箕子教基民以禮義, 田蠶, 識作 設禁八條...).⁴⁷⁴ Kim says that this caused Confucius to say that he would have been glad to go there (Joseon) to live, even by sailing on driftwood. In the end, Gija was worshiped, not as a deity, but as a Confucian Sage who was even admired by Confucius.⁴⁷⁵

The changes in the Korean historical consciousness during the period of Mongol intervention were reflected in two main works of historiography, the *Memorabilia of*

⁴⁷² Han, Yeongwoo, “Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties,” 351–352.

⁴⁷³ Kim Busik, *Samguksagi*, 26.

⁴⁷⁴ Kim Busik, *Samguksagi*, 205.

⁴⁷⁵ Han, Yeongwoo. “Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties,” 355.

the Three Kingdoms (三國遺事) written by Ilyeon (一然, 1206–1289) and the *Records of Emperors and Kings* (帝王韻記) written by Yi Seunghyu (李承休, 1224–1300). This period is an important phase to research the spirit of national identity, as national identity has been formed through interactions with external enemies. The preservation of Goryeo independence, threatened by the Mongol invaders, demanded a consensus among the Goryeo people, especially Goryeo intellectuals. According to Ilyeon, “Gija was enfeoffed and then Dangun moved (...封箕子於朝鮮 檀君乃移...).”⁴⁷⁶ Yi Seunghyu firmly placed Gija Joseon in chronological history and also portrayed a new image of Gija.⁴⁷⁷ It says that “the state (Dangun’s Joseon) fell in 1028... One hundred sixty four years later, the founder of the Later Joseon was Gija... Gija fled to Joseon and independently founded his state. King Wu heard of it and enfeoffed him. Gija accepted the enfeoffment.” Gija was described as an independent founder who subsequently accepted the status of feudal lord.⁴⁷⁸

Gija was first discussed at the court of the new dynasty in the eighth month of the first year of the new dynasty. It was even before the name of the new dynasty, Joseon, was chosen (1392). It means Gija was an important symbol to the new dynasty based on Neo-Confucianism. King Taejo of the Joseon dynasty decided to sacrifice Dangun as the symbol of the Korean ruler, and Gija as the symbol of Korean culture, from the first phase of the new dynasty.⁴⁷⁹ According to Han Yeongwoo’s research, Yi I, one of the prominent Neo-Confucian literati in the mid Joseon, also said that Confucian ways became widespread in Korea through Gija. Korean clothes and customs became the same as those of China, transformed by the

⁴⁷⁶ Ilyeon, *Samgukyusa*, 33.

⁴⁷⁷ Han, Yeongwoo. “Goryeo ~ Joseon Jeongieui Gija Insik” 29 - 30.

⁴⁷⁸ Han, Yeongwoo, “Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties,” 358.

⁴⁷⁹ *Taejo Sillok*, 1392. 8. 11. 2.

rule of benevolence and wisdom, and Korea became a country of high culture and civilization. Yi concluded that the Korean people had existed since time immemorial, certainly as long as the Chinese. Then he attributed to Gija a high level of Korean civilization and culture.⁴⁸⁰ Finally, Gija became a prominent Confucian sage. If so, what has occurred in Korean historical philosophy concerning Gija?

The Ming-Qing transition heavily affected the Joseon dynasty and its historiography. One of the barbarians established Qing and conquered Ming in 1644. It was a very important and real matter to the Joseon. During the Ming period, Ming was Confucius's nation and the elder brother to Joseon. What is more, Ming was the centre of the world to Joseon Neo-Confucians. Therefore, Gija was needed as a link between the Middle State, China (中華), and Joseon. After Ming's fall, however, Joseon Neo-Confucians thought that Qing, the barbarian country, could not perform the same role as the Ming. Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars needed to re-conceptualize Joseon as the legitimate successor of Chinese civilization (小中華思想). It did not mean that Joseon had to abandon the link, Gija. On the contrary, Gija became a more important figure utilized to make Joseon the only Confucian state left.

Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Confucian historical consciousness made the theory that Joseon was the legitimate successor of Chinese civilization firmer. As mentioned in the third chapter, Joseon Neo-Confucians believed that the middle state (中華) is based on the theory of the principle (理) and the East barbarian (夷) is based on the material force (氣). The essence of the middle state cannot be changed as it is the

⁴⁸⁰ Han, Yeongwoo, "Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties," 369–370.

principle. In the end, Joseon Neo-Confucian literati believed that Gija's descendents, which even Confucius envied, could be the successor of Chinese civilization after Ming fell.⁴⁸¹

If one understands the rhetoric of Gija and Dangun, one should understand Neo-Confucian historiography based on Confucian legitimacy. It would be good to deal with Confucian conventional historiography.

The Confucian tradition of historical writing was formed by Ban Gu (班固, ?–CE 97), who wrote the *Han History* (漢書). There are two main issues. One is the legitimacy of a kingdom or dynasty transcending historiography (正統) and the other is ethical judgment. After Ban Gu, Zhu Xi set up the rules of Neo-Confucian historiography through his *Outlines and Details based on the Comprehensive Mirror* (通鑑綱目). To trace a single line of legitimacy became an important aim of Neo-Confucian historical writing.⁴⁸² From this point of view, Dangun Joseon, the one prior Gija Joseon, must have been barbarian, and thus played no part in the chain of legitimate kingdoms. As only Silla could be in the chain of legitimacy, Goguryeo and Baekje were excluded as well.

In this international context and the strengthening of Neo-Confucian historical consciousness, Silhak scholars' conceptualisations developed as well. For example, the historiography of one of the representative Shilhak scholars, Yi Ik, is a useful reference point. Yi Ik argued the Legitimacy of the Three Han (三韓正統論) in his

⁴⁸¹ Ji, Duhwan, *Joseonsidae Sasangsaewi Jaejomyeong*, 278.

⁴⁸² Karlsson, "The Middle Kingdom of the East: In Search of New Paradigms for Korean History," 6.

Seonghosaseol (星湖僊說) in 1740. Yi Ik accepted the Neo-Confucian single chain of Gija Joseon – Mahan – Silla suggested by Hong Yeoha (洪汝河, 1620–1674):

Dangun's descendants were apparently too weak to maintain control over their kingdom, so Gija took it over and laid the foundations for a new government... The Three Han region was nothing more than a group of uncivilized tributary states below Joseon's southern border. Only after Gi Jun (Gija's descendant king) fled south to escape from Wiman... By reestablishing his government (Mahan) in the south, Gi Jun kept the line of dynastic legitimacy intact. Wiman, who took over in the north, did not inherit that legitimacy since he was nothing but a barbarian... When Silla sent an envoy to pay tribute to Mahan, he was told to show ritual respect for a superior state... Baekje assembled troops secretly and attacked Mahan should be recorded in history as "Baekje initiated hostilities and attacked..."

(*Seonghosaseol* 38: 12b-14b, cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 2, 222–224)

The *Seonghosaseol* is a very famous Silhak book and an example of nationalist history writing, but, as it can be seen, it is typical Neo-Confucian historiography, and includes the themes of legitimacy, civilization, barbarianism and ethical judgment.

In spite of these clear evidences that Yi Ik had developed a typical Neo-Confucian legitimacy theory, there is a famous phrase based on the claim that Yi Ik is a nationalist historian with a keen awareness of territory:

This opportunity was lost and we had to retreat and ended up with just a small piece of land. We became a weak country under Heaven, not being able to escape the fate of a bird in a cage or a frog in a well. Due to this the nature of our people became stubborn. Oh! Is this our destiny?

(*Seonghosaseol*, Vol. 21, 渤海)

After Qing's establishment, the interest in the Liaodong and Manchuria area became an issue between Qing and Joseon. These areas had of course been firmly within the control of the Ming, but they had no significance except as borderlands before the Qing conquest. The Qing emperors, however, wanted to trace their origins back to the Jangbaek mountain (白頭山).⁴⁸³ This region came to play a central role in Qing ideology and self-perception, but it also started to encroach upon the Korean historical memory. The above lament refers to the failure of Goryeo to seize the land that had belonged to Balhae. However, despite his emotional outburst, Yi Ik did not consider Balhae to be a part of Korean history.⁴⁸⁴ In addition, such territorial awareness can be found in earlier times. The Khitan tried to cross Goryeo's borderline, and Seo Hi (徐熙, 940–998) led them back with this famous act of diplomacy:

Sun-ning (a general of the Khitan) said to (Seo) Hi, "Your country rose in Silla territory. Goguryeo territory is in our possession. But you have encroached on it... Because of this, our great country came to attack you..." Hi replied, "That is not so. Our country is in fact former Goguryeo, and that is why it is named

⁴⁸³ Eliot, "The limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies," 604.

⁴⁸⁴ Karlsson, "The Middle Kingdom of the East: In Search of New Paradigms for Korean History," 24–25.

Goryeo and has a capital at Pyeongyang. If you want to discuss territorial boundaries, the Eastern Capital of your country is within our borders. How can you call our move an encroachment?

(*Goryeosajeolyo* 2: 49b – 52b cited in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. 1, 300)

Even Jeong Dojeon, who tried to find some similarities between Joseon's King Taejo and Gija in trying to win Ming's favour, urged King Taejo to launch an expedition to conquer the Liaodong peninsula to reclaim old Goguryeo territory. Thereby the Ming Emperor accused Jeong of being "the root of evil troubling Korea" and attempted to drive him from power in fear of his plans to attack the Liaodong peninsula.⁴⁸⁵

It does not matter whether Yi Ik included Wiman or Balhae in Korean history or not. Whether Yi Ik lamented "lost land" or not cannot be the criterion by which to identify that they are nationalist. Yi Ik's basic historical consciousness, as mentioned above, is based on a very recognisable Neo-Confucian theory (華夷論). From the historical consciousness viewpoint, he was not a nationalist historian but just a Neo-Confucian historian. Awareness of territory and eagerness to protect self-identity against Khitan, Mongol and Jurchen are very common and natural defensive responses. From this point of view, Seo Hi and Jeong Dojeon are the same as Yi Ik. If one wants to claim that Yi Ik was a nationalist, he should include Seo Hi and Jeong Dojeon as well. Consequently, the assertion that Silhak scholars are nationalistic should be reconsidered.

⁴⁸⁵ Han, Yeongwoo, "Kija Worship in the Koryo and Early Yi Dynasties," 359–369.

6.5. Last Moment or New Beginning of Joseon Intellectual Trends?

Neo-Confucian literati tried to find a more concrete standard to explain their complex age through the Horak Controversy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (chapter 5) since the Neo-Confucian literati failed to find a concrete explanation within the concept of *Li* for a complex and turbulent age in the Ritual Controversy of the seventeenth century (chapter 4). However, the Horak Controversy apparently led Joseon Neo-Confucianism to a dead-end. Now only two options were left.

The first option was to find another solution beyond Neo-Confucianism, therefore late Joseon intellectuals tried to find something new in Qing's various trends. This could be called Bukhakpa. The revival of Yang Learning, the advent of Western Learning, the fashion of Qing's new literary style (文體), and so forth could be a new way forward for the late Joseon intellectual milieu. There were apparently various and fresh intellectual stimuli from Qing. However, the weakening of Joseon Neo-Confucianism was more decisive than the strengthening of Qing's civilization in terms of accepting Qing's new trends. If the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were happy with their discipline and found solutions within the Neo-Confucianism, then new influences from Qing would also remain a minority interest. Joseon Neo-Confucianism had already come down from its unrivalled position. Some called those days the renaissance of Joseon intellectual world, but in fact it was also a time of intellectual wandering.

The second option was to conceal various liberal trends. King Jeongjo, as a guardian of the Joseon dynasty based on Neo-Confucianism, reluctantly proclaimed the *Munchebanjeong* (文體反正). He sensed a danger in these various intellectual trends

and spotted new literary styles as the root of all evils. He wanted to recover conventional Neo-Confucianism by reforming the literary style as a first step. King Jeongjo is recognized as a supporter of the new trends but he was, in fact, opposed to them. His *Munchebanjeong* worked and there was no further prominent figure in Joseon intellectual history. Joseon was in a kind of intellectual vacuum in the nineteenth century. However, it was not immune from external stimulus. Joseon intellectual society collapsed through internal, fervent debates, such as the Horak Controversy. It could be the last moment of Joseon Neo-Confucianism but also advent of a moment of Joseon intellectual renewal, Silhak.

Silhak has been believed to have been an internal energy against external stimulus. Finding influences from Qing, Japan and Western countries could be misunderstood as imperial historiography. However, this is an instance of the adverse influence of the dichotomy of modernity. If one wants to understand the mood of Joseon intellectual society in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century after the Horak Controversy, one should overcome the influence of modernity theory. This chapter, I think, dispenses with the clouds formed by modernity. Now we are ready to study Silhak as it was. There are two suggestions for the next project.

First, comparative research is needed. This chapter emphasized Silhak's internal energy but it does not mean that Silhak was purely autogenous academic works unaffected by any external stimulus. Silhak was one of the contemporary disciplines and it could have been subject to influence and exerted influence. There were apparently fresh and similar intellectual moods in China, Japan and Korea during the eighteenth century. The doctrine of Wang Yangming (陽明學) and the Evidential

Scholarship (考證學) had been fashioned in China and also triggered new debates in the Joseon dynasty.⁴⁸⁶ Japanese Silhak, *Kohak* (古學) had also already started in the eighteenth century. Therefore, the comprehensive and comparative research on Qing, Japan and Korea around the seventeenth and eighteenth century are definitely needed.

Second, various other sources should be examined. The existing research is limited mainly to the work of some Silhak scholars, but other materials related to them should be dealt with. For example, genealogy (譜學) was an important literati task in Joseon. If one asserts that even the gentry (兩班) should be included in the merchant class, the number of a gentry figure's family members making a living as merchants could be studied. The examination system in Joseon sometimes functioned as a vehicle for the state to deal with important policy issues; it not only enabled the state to publicize its concerns via policy essay questions, but it also solicited potential policy measures in the examinees' answers.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, these documents can illustrate Silhak scholars' theories connected with the pressing political issues of the day. Overcoming the sole frame offered by modernity theory, comprehensive and comparative studies, using various materials not dealt with before, would help to understand what Silhak really is.

Conclusion

⁴⁸⁶ Jeong, Jaejeong, "Joseon Hugi Silhakyongueui Donghyanggwa 'Guksa' Gyogwaseo Seosuleui Byeoncheon," 215.

⁴⁸⁷ Duncan, "Examinations and Orthodoxy in Choson Dynasty Korea," 91.

To contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars Silhak thought was neither heterodox nor something new but one of the fruits of Neo-Confucianism. The ‘failed’ and ‘dream’ aspects of Silhak stress the contrast between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak, were also critically re-examined here. The attempt to extract some commonality from Silhak scholars’ family backgrounds, careers and influences was unsuccessful. What is more, it is now difficult to say that Silhak scholars are nationalistic.

Silhak should be understood within the context of Joseon intellectual trends. The relationship between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak was a kind of principle of action and reaction. Late Joseon intellectuals, some of them no longer orthodoxy Neo-Confucian literati, wandered around trying to find something new in order to explain their complex real world. At the end of Joseon Neo-Confucianism they produced various intellectual strands. Silhak was one of these, or their insights could be grouped under the rubric of Silhak. These fresh intellectual trends were due to an external stimulus, Qing’s developed culture, but also an internal want, the need to develop an alternative of Neo-Confucianism. In addition, there were similar innovative intellectual atmospheres in China, Japan and Korea around the same time. Comparative research between these three countries can enlarge our picture of Silhak. These fresh intellectual developments after the Horak Controversy, the sudden ending of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, form my next research project. This chapter was a kind of spadework for it.

Conclusion

1.

In this dissertation I have analyzed the discourse of the legitimate heirs and enshrinement's meanings within the intellectual trends of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were able to grow into a dominant political and intellectual force by actively leading the discourse, and demonstrated that the discourse could be an effective weapon in gaining a competitive advantage at court. The enshrinement of one's teacher began to be acknowledged as a proper and efficient method to acquire one's political status, which became a new way of evaluating a certain figure or a party. The discourse identified a certain figure or a party as the legitimate heirs through the evaluation of their teachers, whereas the merit awarding system evaluated one's individual or fraternal merits. Neo-Confucian legitimacy became a dominant issue in the sixteenth century. Therefore, the concept of the ideal Neo-Confucian society of that time was a society led by a political power group confirmed by Neo-Confucian legitimacy: the Neo-Confucian literati. In addition, the discourse was more exclusive than the existing merit awarding system, as legitimacy had to be maintained in one single line. This can be understood as the catalyst for the formation of factions, which was a vital political feature of the late Joseon dynasty.

In the end, five figures, Kim Geongpil, Jeong Yeocho, Jo Gwangjo, Yi Eonjeok and Yi Hwang, were enshrined altogether. At this period the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati applied a dual standard; their political legitimacy and Neo-Confucian legitimacy. Due to the enshrinement of the first three figures the late Joseon Neo-Confucians learned that a

resolute attitude regarding Neo-Confucian principles transcended loyalty to kingship or even a dynasty. Their attitude appears impractical and abstruse, but they believed that although a dynasty may rise or fall at any given time, the principles of Neo-Confucianism were eternal. Through the enshrinement of the latter two figures, they showed their great passion and interest in the academic aspects of Neo-Confucianism. Their passion in studying Neo-Confucianism strengthened their theoretical foundation and their strong belief in their philosophy, and they realized their understanding of Neo-Confucianism. These theoretical and practical elements became a pair of wings to help achieve the dream of building an ideal Neo-Confucian society.

2.

Initially, the discourse of *Jaejojieun* was one of the first issues after the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati gained hegemony at the court. As set up by the Four-Seven Debate in the early sixteenth century, this was a good environment for development of Joseon Neo-Confucianism in theoretical terms, as well an opportunity to practice an understanding of Neo-Confucianism with the political power that the Neo-Confucian literati had finally gained. However, it did not directly ensure that they led the discourse using the theoretical and practical elements of Neo-Confucianism. There was not enough time to discuss *Jaejojieun* in terms of the discipline of Neo-Confucianism. In fact, since the subject of the discourse was Ming, any theoretical or practical elements were not needed in the discourse of *Jaejojieun*. Joseon used the discourse of *Jaejojieun* as propaganda, not for diplomatic issues, but for domestic affairs in dealing with the righteous army and the anger of the Joseon people after the war. The Joseon court's

preconceived plan was like this; it was only Ming's relief force that could win the war, and it was the Joseon court that requested it. With the emphasis on Ming's relief force, based on *Jaejojeun*, the court attempted to reduce their responsibility for the failures of the war.

The evaluation of the Ming by the Joseon court, however, was not blind. In theory, before the war Joseon Neo-Confucians already believed that they were superior to the Ming in terms of Neo-Confucianism. They began to treat the name 'Ming' as just a symbolic term for an ideal Neo-Confucian society. In practice, the Joseon court believed that there was no more to learn from Ming and they did not send any more researchers there. Also, during the war Joseon people witnessed the Ming relief force's violence and arrogance, and suffered because of their actions. The hostility against the Ming relief force was more intense than that against the Japanese troops. It seemed apparent that Joseon people's true feeling towards the Ming after the war was more of hostility than a feeling of gratitude.

Joseon Neo-Confucianism developed from one's individual self-cultivation to managing a dynasty using its discipline. It also went beyond simply emulating the Ming and started to boldly judge them with Neo-Confucian discipline itself. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati began to believe that Joseon was more Neo-Confucianized than the Ming.

3.

The discourse of *Jaejojieun*, however, did not remain in the Joseon domestic arena and quickly crossed over into the diplomatic field. It suddenly became one of the most important diplomatic issues between Ming and Joseon after Qing came between them. During the turbulent situation around the Ming-Qing transition, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were required to harmonize the theoretical ideal Neo-Confucian society, Ming and the practical and de facto military power, Qing. It was the first real task for Joseon Neo-Confucians. They adopted the discourse of Sino-centrism and reinterpreted it for Joseon in the seventeenth century.

It is said that Joseon's pro-Ming stance based on *Jaejojieun* simply transitioned to an anti-Qing stance. However, Joseon does not seem to have adhered strictly to a pro-Ming stance and was sometimes inclined to be pro-Qing according to the international context. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati hovered between a pro- and anti-Qing stance. In fact, these two trends were natural reactions against external forces at any time. While the idea of accepting Qing under the pro-Qing stance seemed practical, it was not based on the Neo-Confucian discipline. In the Neo-Confucian view, it was not theoretically comfortable to accept Qing 'barbarians'. However, on the other hand, the idea of the anti-Qing stance of engaging in direct military vengeance was neither practical nor theoretical. If Neo-Confucian legitimacy had remained within Joseon intellectual circles around the discourse of legitimate heir and enshrinement, the international relationship had to be re-aligned with the Neo-Confucian legitimacy around the time of Ming-Qing transition. Although until the discourse of *Jaejojieun* the existing relationship between Ming and Joseon did not need any justification, the new relationship between the barbarian Qing and Joseon had to be newly justified in terms of Neo-Confucian legitimacy.

Sino-centrism was the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's response to the new justifications required. In practice, the actual military power gap between Qing and Joseon did not prevent the realization of Sino-centrism. In theory, the pride of Joseon in being a more advanced civilization than the barbarian Qing had always been there since Joseon's self-esteem was already more elevated than Ming itself. Therefore, Sino-centrism was the optimum answer, which satisfied both the practical and theoretical requirements of the time. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati believed, after the Southern Ming's fall, that Heaven had bestowed a Neo-Confucian mission, including the enlightenment of the barbarian Qing to the high levels of Neo-Confucian civilization as evident in Joseon in the late seventeenth century. Although the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati could have compromised with the relative advantage against Qing in terms of Neo-Confucianism, the new mission as the last bastion of Neo-Confucianism drove them to rebuild Joseon as the ideal Neo-Confucian society. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati's dream, even before the *Imjin* war in mid-sixteenth century, was to become a legitimate successor of Chinese civilization, and this was not a daydream anymore. This seemed to be a sign of the maturity of Joseon Neo-Confucianism.

My findings demonstrate that, first, Joseon Neo-Confucianism was not stagnant but developed dynamically even after the dynastic crises, and the *Imjin* and *Byeongja* wars. Second, the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were not out of touch with urgent matters of state but reacted to changing conditions and came up with their own intellectual solutions. Various issues highlighted in each chapter have shown that the Neo-Confucian literati tried to offer a Neo-Confucian solution for the dilemmas of their own time in a dynamic way.

4.

Rebuilding Joseon as an ideal Neo-Confucian society had become one of the major interests of Joseon intellectuals in the seventeenth century. It was no matter that Joseon was more Neo-Confucianized than Ming anymore. After Ming's fall, the mission to rebuild Joseon as the ideal Neo-Confucian society seemed to have been bestowed from the Heavens. The Joseon of the seventeenth century seemed to be obsessed with this mission.

In order to realize the new mission to rebuild Joseon as the ideal Neo-Confucian society, Ritual Learning became the new significant issue among the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati. Although Ritual Learning had been one of the main issues in Neo-Confucianism from the beginning, its comprehensive theoretical study was a fresh trend in seventeenth century Joseon. The Joseon Neo-Confucian literati sought a common and absolute principle in order to rebuild Joseon through the pursuit of universal *Li* in Ritual Learning, and this dealt, in theory, with one of the most fundamental elements of Neo-Confucianism as well as, in practice, with one of the most generic topics of all daily lives. In this respect, Ritual Learning seemed to effectively harmonize the theoretical and practical aspects of Neo-Confucianism, and this period also gave the appearance of being the most prosperous time for Joseon Neo-Confucianism. The Ritual Controversy was the point where Ritual Learning on paper clashed with particular ritual issues in reality. Joseon Neo-Confucians found that Ritual Learning could not be the answer for their pursuit of absolute standards within Neo-Confucianism since the *Li* was more complex than expected. In reaction to this, the following generation dealing with the Ritual Controversy turned their eyes to the more fundamental and profound theoretical

issues.

The fresh interest in the Supreme Ultimate, one of the more fundamental and profound theoretical issues began to rise amongst the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati. However, the core of their interest was the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the variety of the real world and not on the discourse of Supreme Ultimate itself. Soon the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were divided into two sides; one emphasized the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate and the other emphasized the variety of the real world. Although their arguments seemed different on the surface, their ultimate direction was the same. The interest of their debate developed from the relationship between the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate, the variety of the real world to the relationship between human nature and the mind. Both sides focused on human nature itself and asked whether a man had a Supreme Ultimate (principle) as his real nature from birth. Joseon Neo-Confucian literati were unable to get any answer or reach an agreement through the Controversy. The conventional Neo-Confucian base, the oneness of the Supreme Ultimate, the harmony through principle, self-cultivation through examination of one's nature or mind, and so on collapsed because of the Horak Controversy.

5.

The Horak Controversy was apparently the dead-end for Joseon Neo-Confucianism. Only two options were left to Joseon intellectuals in the late eighteenth century. The first was to find another solution beyond Neo-Confucianism. This trend encompassed

Northern Learning, the revival of Yang Learning, the advent of Western Learning, the School of Evidential Scholarship, Qing's new literary style and so on. Some called this period 'the pinnacle of the Joseon civilization' (Choe, W: 13–44), but in fact it was also the time of intellectual wandering. The ideal society of eighteenth century Joseon intellectuals seemed not to be a Neo-Confucian society anymore. Apparently there were various intellectual trends outside Neo-Confucianism in the eighteenth century. These various intellectual trends could be the main issue of my further research since this thesis only focuses on Joseon Neo-Confucianism to prevent drifting away from the main topic. The second trend was to conceal the various intellectual trends within the existing Neo-Confucianism. King Jeongjo was the representative of the second trend and his works were effective to some extent. There was no other prominent figure, except for Jeong Yakyong, in the rest of Joseon intellectual history. Joseon was in a kind of intellectual vacuum in the nineteenth century. However, it was not immune from external stimulus. Joseon Neo-Confucianism as one of the main intellectual trends in the late Joseon period collapsed after internal, fervent debates, namely the Horak Controversy.

What we see in the last phase of the Joseon dynasty, during the Horak Controversy, is that Joseon Neo-Confucianism reached its end point by itself. Ritual Learning was a result of the way in which the Neo-Confucian literati attempted to deal with the Ming-Qing transition and the Horak Controversy was a logical outcome of the failure of the Ritual Controversy. Late eighteenth century Joseon saw efforts to establish an ideal Neo-Confucian state and the Horak Controversy was concerned with the philosophical and ethical foundations of such a society. In the end, by proceeding in this direction, Joseon Neo-Confucianism found its own limitations. On this account Joseon Neo-

Confucianism reached not only its pinnacle but also its sudden fall through the Horak Controversy, an internal factor. Finally, I have shown that the situation has been vastly over-simplified by Japanese imperialist historians and Korean nationalist scholars alike. The vital thing is to see the way in which various intellectual debates were interconnected into the development of Joseon Neo-Confucianism.

6.

The theory of modernity is believed to be the only framework within which to understand Joseon but in actual fact it becomes an obstacle in understanding Joseon. The theory of modernity brings about a sharp classification between Neo-Confucianism and Silhak and generates biased evaluations of them. The responsibility for Joseon's failure to modernize is placed on Neo-Confucianism, and the potential for Joseon's self-modernization was awarded to Silhak because Silhak is considered by nationalist historians to be the seed of modernity.

When the late Joseon is viewed without the framework of modernity theory, it is hard to find actual evidence of Silhak as one of the main intellectual trends of late Joseon. Silhak is thought to be neither a heterodoxy nor something new to Neo-Confucianism at that time. It is also revealed that there was no commonality in the background of Silhak scholars, either in their births, careers and evaluations of them. By highlighting Silhak scholars' unfortunate pasts, nationalist historians appear to have been making excuses for Joseon's failure to develop. In addition, it is difficult to say that Silhak scholars were nationalistic. My analysis of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak, however, are free from the

conventional evaluations as traditional, conservative, impractical or a stagnant ideology. This thesis studied the birth, growth, prosperity and fall of Joseon Neo-Confucianism and this has revealed a far more complex but vivid picture of the interaction between the political context and Neo-Confucian solutions. The following various and vivid intellectual trends will be the next research project.

For a long period both Western observers and East Asian intellectuals in the twentieth century viewed Confucianism as a hindrance to development in the region. But recent scholars like R. Bin Wong in his book, *China Transformed*, and Alexander Woodside in his book *Lost Modernities* have started to re-evaluate the role of Confucianism in the historical development of the region. Wong has reconsidered Confucianism and its role in the historical development of East Asia in an effort to challenge the privilege given to the European model of modernization in terms of understanding historical changes, or the “lack” of it, both by Western observers and by intellectuals in the regions who internalized these ideas in the early twentieth century.⁴⁸⁸ Although his focus is slightly different, his work has influenced this research.

This dissertation was limited to the resilience and decline of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. It means that this dissertation had a weakness from the outset. Although there were various intellectual trends in late Joseon, this research disbranches them. The late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Joseon intellectual trends are a gigantic issue. My journey to study these various, vivid and energetic intellectual movements began from this basic research. Woodside’s comparative research with China, Vietnam and Korea

⁴⁸⁸ Wong, *China Transformed*, 1–8.

also gives a fresh inspiration to this dissertation.⁴⁸⁹ A comparative research of Qing, Japan, and Joseon's various intellectual trends beyond Neo-Confucianism, especially in the eighteenth century, could be the next research topic.

I analyze Neo-Confucian intellectuals operating within a particular ideological system and attempt to expand that Neo-Confucian ideology throughout their sphere of influence; however, that ideological movement was judged an unmitigated failure by intellectuals who operated according to the theory of modernity of the intellectual system that replaced the Joseon Neo-Confucianism. No one could blame the Joseon Neo-Confucian literati since they honestly sought a solution for their own time. They failed to find a solution within Neo-Confucianism but they, as the intellectuals of their own time, did their best. The various intellectual trends of each time partly owed the intellectuals who failed to find a solution in Neo-Confucianism and tried to find it beyond Neo-Confucianism. Their intellectual wandering began to extend Joseon intellectuals' boundaries beyond Neo-Confucianism from the eighteenth century onwards. Silhak or other fresh movements, such as Yang Learning and Western Learning, should be considered in terms of Joseon intellectuals' struggle to find an answer for their own time, and they did their best to achieve this.

⁴⁸⁹ Woodside, *Lost Modernities*, 1–16.

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